

***Ero-Guro-Nansensu: Modernity and its Discontents in Taishō and
Early Shōwa Japan***

By

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In

History

August 31, 2020
Nashville, Tennessee

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Michael Bess, for his support, encouragement, and insightful comments in the final stages of this project. I am also indebted to my co-adviser Dr. Mark Wollaeger and committee members Dr. Celso Castilho, and Dr. Gerald Figal for their guidance. I am especially grateful for Dr. Samira Sheikh's unwavering support and sage advice in the final years of this project. I would also like to thank Karl Ziellenbach for reading and editing early chapter drafts. Finally, I must thank my sister, Anne, and my parents, Joe and Donna, for believing in this project and supporting it to the end.

Table of Contents	Page
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	vi
A Note on Japanese Transliteration	vii
Chapters	
Introduction	1
What is ero-guro-nansensu?	7
Scholarly Literature	15
Modernity and Modernism	16
The Detective in the Modern City	19
Women, Modernism, and Mass Culture	22
Abnormal Psychology and Perception	24
Primitivism and the Savage Other	27
Censorship and Modernism	30
Historicizing Emotions	34
01 Detective Fiction and Modernology: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Modern City	43
Theorizing the Detective	45
The New Sensations of Urban Life	48
Transportation and Mental Shock	57
“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and the Birth of the Urban Detective	60
Recovering Traces of Identity	72
Kon Wajirō’s Modernology: A New Technique for Studying Urban Life	77
02 The Woman Problem, The Pure Film Movement, and the Sublime Ero of Cinema	
Actresses	89
The Woman Problem and the Sublime Woman	90
The Aesthetics of the Sublime	95
The Pure Film Movement and the Dream of Exporting Japanese Film	99
Sublime Actresses on Screen	108
The End of the Pure Film Movement	125
Actresses’ Ero Reimagined	133
03 The New Abnormal: Understanding Mental Illness and Modern Perception Through Hentai	136
Modernity and Mental Health	139
Abnormal Psychology in the Taishō Press	142
Literature and the Crisis of Perception	153
Optical Horrors and Cinematic Visions	158

04 The Colonial Grotesque: Modernity, Politics, and the “Savage” Other.....	179
The Japanese Empire in the Taisho Period	181
Colonial Travel Literature	187
Ethnographic Surrealism	202
Cannibalism: A Practice Grotesque, Primitive, and Chinese	207
The Eroticism of the Primitive and Grotesque	224
05 Political Nansensu: Censorship and the Thrill of Forbidden Speech	234
Modernism and Censorship	237
Censorship in Taisho and Early Showa Japan	239
Modernist Writers Respond	253
Ero-guro-nansensu and the Proletarian Arts Movement	272
06 The End of Ero-guro-nansensu	280
Bibliography	291

List of Figures

Figure	Page
1 Street corner and traffic diagrams from “Ichirokunigo nen Tōkyō Ginza machi fūzoku kiroku”	83
2 Images of shoes from “Kinsei haikara hensenshi”	86
3 Images of European shoes from “Fukushoku no guro”	86
4 Advertisement for bromide photographs of film stars	109
5 Dorothy Gish	110
6 Jobyna Ralston	112
7 Hanabusa Yuriko	113
8 Advertisement for album to hold collected film frames	122
9 Advertisement for Bandō Tsumasaburo	129
10 Tsukigata Ryūnosuke	130
11 Illustration for “The Man Wearing Black”	160
12 Advertisement for <i>A Page of Madness</i> , (Kurutta Ippeiji, 1926)	170-171
13 Ethnographic Images from <i>Hentai Fūzoku Gahō</i>	225-226
14 Betty Compton and Asai Bride from <i>Hanzai Kagaku</i>	229
15 “Opium Smoker in China” from <i>Hanzai Kagaku</i>	231
16 Cover of November 1928 <i>Gurotesuku</i> magazine	235
17 Images of Tattoos from <i>Gurotesuku</i>	261
18 Excerpt from Ōsumi Tamezō’s essay, “Perverse sexual desire,”	268

A Note on Japanese Transliterations

All Japanese names are written as family name - given name, except for scholars publishing in English. I have used the Modified Hepburn System to transliterate Japanese words. Japanese translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

Ero-guro-nansensu, from the English words *ero* for “eroticism,” *guro* for “grotesque,” and *nansensu* for “nonsense” was a Japanese mass culture movement that encompassed literature, popular magazines, cinema, and criticism. It responded to feelings of alienation and anxiety that arose out of social change during the Taishō (1912-1926) and early Shōwa periods (1926-1989), famously described by writer Akutagawa Ryunosuke as “a vague unease” (*bonyarishita fuan*).¹ This dissertation will argue that *ero-guro-nansensu* discourses looked for compensatory value in mass culture as a means of coping with feelings of anxiety and distress induced by the rapid modernization that the nation experienced in the first half of the twentieth century.

The early decade of the twentieth century in Japan were characterized by increasing migration into cities and shifts from fishing, forestry, and agricultural work to manufacturing and sales. Between 1907 and 1929, the percentage of the population working in manufacturing and sales increased from 27.3% to 36.2%. Similarly, the percentage of the population living in cities increased from 18.1% in 1920 to 24.1% in 1930.² The standard of living also improved; between 1919 and 1922, the boom years following the end of the first world war in Europe, consumption increased 160 percent.

¹ Quoted in Masato Mori, *Nippon ero guro nansensu: shōwa modan kayō* (Tokyo: Métier, 2016), 20. The Taishō Era corresponds to the reign of the Taishō Emperor, Yoshihito, and the Shōwa Period corresponds to the reign of the Shōwa Emperor, Hirohito. Japanese scholars often use Taishō and Early Shōwa to encompass the 1910s through the early 1930s, before war with China.

² Satō Takeshi, “Modanizumu to Amerikaka - 1920nendai o chūshin toshite,” in *Nihon modanizumu no kenkyū: Shisō seikatsu bunka*, ed. by Minami Hiroshi (Tokyo: Yashima shashoku, 1982), 22.

While white-collar urban consumers benefited most from these trends, sociologists have used historical surveys to show that even urban laborers in the 1920s began enjoying leisure activities like sports, travel, and reading.³ In contrast, traditional rural industries seemed locked in a permanent recession, and critics like Yanagita Kunio observed that rural areas provided labor and capital while receiving nothing in return.⁴ Urbanization, economic development, and changes in everyday life swept rapidly through Japan in the 1910s and 1920s.

Women were increasingly visible in public spaces, first as students and later as service industry workers like bus guides, department store clerks, and cafe waitresses. The tradition of marriages arranged by the family or intermediaries was being replaced by so-called “love marriages” (*renai kekkon*), and could end in tragedy, as in the famous case in which a baron’s daughter fell in love with her chauffeur and the two attempted suicide together after they were forbidden to meet.⁵ Women were also expected to become rational consumer subjects and household managers, a role which some contemporary critics decried as establishing a “feminine culture.”⁶ By 1923, the figure most strongly associated with modernity was the *moga* or *modan garu*, from the English phrase “modern girl.” She was “a highly commodified cultural construct crafted by journalists” and debates swirled over whether she was a mindless consumer or an independent worker, a symbol of eros or a political activist, and a trivial symbol of

³ Miriam Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Japanese Modern Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 22-23.

⁴ Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4-6.

⁵ See *Fūjin Kōron*, February and March 1920 issues.

⁶ Harootunian, 17.

modern decadence or an active producer of modern culture.⁷ Love marriages, *moga*, and concerns over the feminization of culture all indicate the central role gender played in shaping discourses of anxiety about modern life.

At the same time, new forms of mass media expanded throughout the country. Film was initially viewed in the 1890s and 1900s as a technological spectacle from the West and was enjoyed alongside earlier *misemono* (sideshow) spectacles like living dolls, panoramas, and shadow plays.⁸ By 1926, there were 1,056 movie theaters in Japan. Radio reached 3,500 homes in 1922 and 24,500 the following year, broadcasting content ranging from Western music to vignettes about modern life. Newspaper circulation increased from 1,630,000 in 1905 to 6,250,000 in 1926, reaching one household out of six. Magazines catered to every possible demographic, and the number registered with the state increased from 3,123 in 1918 to 11,118 in 1932.⁹ Critics debated whether mass entertainment should be for the masses or by them; literary critic Honda Hisao argued that the uncultured masses should be given entertainment designed by intellectuals to educate them while critic Katō Kazuo thought entertainment should be the citizens' means of expressing their humanity or national character.¹⁰

Other intellectuals struggled with the increasing influence of American, rather than European, mass culture after World War I, a trend that appeared to accelerate after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923. Emphasizing the influence of American film

⁷ Silverberg 51-72.

⁸ Aaron Andrew Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010),40-46.

⁹ Silverberg, 23-25.

¹⁰ Gerow, 75.

imports, Marxist critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke observed in 1925 that “Japan had become a complete vassal state of Hollywood.”¹¹ Cultural producers had to negotiate not only the development of new forms of mass culture, but also the feeling that cultural imports were supplanting Japanese culture.

On one hand, by the Taishō period there was a general perception among intellectuals that Japan had advanced technologically and become culturally modern. But on the other hand, they also observed the ambivalent international recognition of Japan’s new status. The economy was fully capitalized and the state was expanding its territory outward; both Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905 and its annexation of Korea in 1910 were viewed as powerful symbols of this. Nevertheless, commentators worried that Japan was still not recognized as an equal by the Western powers, despite a seat at the table at the post-WWI Peace of Paris and the recent founding of the League of Nations. For example, one columnist writing in *Fujin Kōron* (*The Women’s Review*) was concerned that Japan would go to war with the United States, as a result of anti-Japanese sentiment in America, the propaganda of domestic war hawks, and import restrictions on Japanese goods in Europe and America.¹² Equally troubling was the so-called “China problem”; after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912, political power in that vast country was chaotically divided and redivided between political parties, warlords, and foreign investors. Famous writers, including Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Tanizaki Junichiro, and Satō Haruo, traveled from Japan to China during the prewar period, often funded by a newspaper with the expectation of producing an exclusive

¹¹ Quoted in Harootunian, 22. See also Satō 6-56.

¹² Jōnan Manato, “Nihon kokumin no zento ni yokotawaru futatsu no anshō,” *Fujin Kōron*, January 1921, 22-27.

travelogue afterwards, or invited by members of the Japanese business community or government.¹³ Most Japanese intellectuals were sympathetic to their Chinese peers in the 1910s and early 1920s, aware that China suffered from the same problems of global imperialism and exploitative foreign investors as Japan had a generation earlier. But by the late 1920s, there were increasingly loud calls for military intervention in China. Japan's indeterminate geopolitical position - neither seen as an equal to America or Europe, nor as a colonial or semi-colonial state like other Asian nations - was another powerful source of anxiety.

The Japanese literary establishment, or *bundan*, exercised significant influence over the imagined community of professional writers through editing and publishing criticism in literary and general interest journals. The most powerful was *Bungei shunjū* (*Literary Seasons*), founded in January 1923 by playwright Kikuchi Kan, while the most visible modernist journal was *Bungei jidai* (*Literary Age*) founded by *Shinkankakuha* (*New Sensationist*) writers led by Yokomitsu Riichi and Kawabata Yasunari, to give two examples.¹⁴ Magazines like *Chūō Kōron* (*The Central Review*) and *Fūjin Kōron* (*The Women's Review*) published short articles by cultural critics in addition to news articles, editorials, and short fiction.

However, it was not always easy for writers and publishers to freely debate important social and political issues. In addition to gatekeeping by editors, publishers, and critics, writers had to contend with state censorship, which had a long history in

¹³ Joshua Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 250-275.

¹⁴ William O. Gardner, *Advertising Tower: Japanese Modernism and Modernity in the 1920s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 20-23

Japan under the Tokugawa Shogunate. Many people accepted that the state had a legitimate interest in controlling dangerous reading materials, particularly when confronted with politically destabilizing movements from the left and right. But writers and editors were often frustrated by bureaucrats who limited what kind of romantic content was acceptable in artistic works, especially when the standards of decency seemed arbitrary and constantly subject to change. The dominant literary modes at the time were concerned with explorations of subjectivity and individual experience, and naturally included depictions of love and sex. It was a constant source of frustration that a work could be banned and subject to fines on the decision of a policeman or Home Ministry bureaucrat who found a work too arousing or politically subversive.

In the midst of these trends, writers, editors, artists, and critics debated what role art, literature, and other types of aesthetic practice had in shaping how people interpreted and responded to rapid cultural change. Should art satisfy the tastes of the masses, or should writers produce pure art solely for the sake of art?¹⁵ How could Japanese literature incorporate new Western literary trends ranging from naturalism and romanticism to symbolism and vitalism?¹⁶ And since Japanese literature at the time was dominated by autobiographical and confessional styles that purported to objectively depict reality, did writers have an artistic duty to live the kind of lifestyle their readers expected and found interesting? Many artists, writers, and critics believed that art and

¹⁵ Matthew C. Strecher, "Purely Mass or Massively Pure? The Division Between 'Mass' and 'Pure' Literature," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51: (1996), 360-361.

¹⁶ Suzuki Sadami, "Rewriting the Literary History of Japanese Modernism," in *Pacific Rim Modernisms*, ed. by Mary Ann Gillies, Helen Sword, and Steven Yao, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 76-78.

aesthetic theory could solve new problems of industrialization and urbanization.¹⁷ This made the work of artists and writers feel deeply significant, despite the reality that many writers struggled to make a living through their work.

This dissertation will examine how anxieties emerged, were addressed, and sometimes alleviated in *ero-guro-nansensu* discourses. What was the best way for individuals to understand and survive in new urban environments? How were men supposed to feel about relationships when “new women” and “modern girls” had replaced “good wives” and “wise mothers”? How did cinema shape aesthetics, experience, and perception? What was the effect of these changes on one’s mental state? One newspaper headline described a case of suicide as “a sacrifice to modern culture,” while another called neurasthenia the “national disease.” Could Japanese artists and writers participate in global mass culture without losing their distinctive cultural identity? And, was it possible to turn concerns over whether Japan was as “civilized” as the West into justification for expanding colonial projects in “savage” nations? These questions, and the answers *ero-guro* writers, editors, and artists produced, reveal the causes of their anxiety and unease and how they responded.

What is *ero-guro-nansensu*?

While the phrase *ero-guro-nansensu* first appeared in print in the early 1930s as yet another new trendy buzzword, it represented a broader and older aesthetic practice that sought to engage constructively with the anxieties of modern society. The three

¹⁷ Suzuki, 73.

words were not even used together until the summer of 1930, when they appeared as a popular catchphrase in a number of newspaper and magazine articles.¹⁸ The simplest explanation of *ero-guro-nansensu* is found in the original English words: *ero* is short for “eroticism,” *guro* for “grotesque,” and *nansensu* for “nonsense.” *Ero* encompassed new and often troubling forms of eroticism, in both literature and mass culture. *Guro* began in detective stories but could include anything mysterious or uncanny; it was often combined with *ero* in stories and articles focused on sexual deviance. *Nansensu* appeared meaningless but could contain subversive political messages ranging from leftist economic reform to critiques of government censorship. As a whole, the movement used extreme representations to reveal the extreme state of modern life. As one critic explained at the time, “From the point of view of the present state of affairs, people call it ‘ultra.’ And the form of that ‘ultra’ itself is typically modern.”¹⁹

Ero-guro-nansensu, often shortened to *ero-guro* or simply one of its components, embraced the ‘ultra’ characteristic of modern life.

Of the three words, it is simplest to understand what was meant by *ero*. During the Meiji period, *ero* was embodied by female *gidayu* singers, who sang traditional Japanese-style music and inflamed the passions of their young male fans. Later, as it became increasingly acceptable for women to appear on stage, women began performing music at the Asakusa Opera that was somewhere between opera and popular songs. Needless to say, there was much discussion of the appeal of female

¹⁸ Mori, 12-13.

¹⁹ Nii Itaru, “Modan eiji to modan raifu,” *Gendai ryōki sentan zukan*, April 1931, 3-7, reprinted in *Ero guro nansensu*, ed. by Shimamura Teru (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2005), 612-613.

singers and actresses in the popular press.²⁰ At the same time, the I-novel (*watakushi shōsetsu*) was swiftly becoming the dominant genre of Japanese literature. The I-novel was written in the form of a fictional or semi-fictional autobiography or confession, focused on the author's feelings and experiences. I-novels often dramatized the author's sexual liaisons or feelings of desire to a much greater degree than in earlier forms of Japanese literature, and also contributed to popular and literary ideas of what was *ero*. And outside of the literary realm, new avenues for erotic pleasure began to appear. There were cafe waitresses who offered companionship and beverages, and female dance hall workers who sold dances to eager young men. Women were also increasingly visible on public transportation and in new Tokyo shopping districts like Ginza; many male writers obsessed over upper class schoolgirls occupying public space on streetcars and trains for the first time. It is important to recognize that *ero* was primarily concerned with women as objects of male desire rather than the desires of women themselves. By 1930, popular *ero-guro-nansensu* magazines like *Grotesque* (*Gurotesuku*) and *Criminal Science* (*Hanzai Kagaku*) frequently represented *ero* with photographs of exotic entertainers like Josephine Baker, revue dancers, and artistically posed nudes.

Guro was often conceived of as features of modern society that were mysterious or weird, and one of the earliest appearances of *guro* was in detective fiction (*tantei shōsetsu*). Detective fiction had been widely read in Japan since the late nineteenth century, first as translations and adaptations, but later including original works by

²⁰ Mori, 14.

Japanese authors.²¹ Detective fiction was popular in literary and mass magazines. *The Central Review* ran a selection of detective stories by Tanizaki Junichirō, Satō Haruo, and Akutagawa in 1918 and *New Youth (Shinseinen)* not only published translations of Western detective stories beginning with its first issue in 1920 but also ran famed detective fiction author Edogawa Ranpō's first published story.²² *The Central Review* was pitched towards an educated, intellectual, and urbane audience while *New Youth* was aimed at young men in their teens and twenties; detective stories clearly appealed to a wide cross section of Japanese society. Broadly speaking, these detective stories often placed the protagonist in an uncanny and mysterious situation, such as finding an inexplicable corpse or being falsely implicated in a crime, then explained how the protagonist managed to save himself. Detective stories also offered a means of exploring deviant and criminal psychology, and had the added advantage of not upsetting censors, provided the criminal was caught by the authorities or killed as a result of their crimes by the end of the story. In a similar vein, stories about violent crimes, executions, jails, and punishments were popular sources of *guro* in general interest magazines as well as specifically *ero-guro-nansensu* publications such as *Criminal Science*. These explorations of the strange and frightening aspects of modernity allowed the reader to feel mastery over the sources of their unease.

²¹ Takeuchi Mizuho, "Edogawa ranpo to umehara hokumei no 'gurotesuku' na teikō," in *"Hentai" Nijyūmenshō: mō hitotsu no kindai nihon seishinshi*, ed. by Takeuchi Mizuho and Metamo kenkyūkai, (Tokyo: Rikka shuppan, 2016), 1-2.

²² "Futari no geijutsuka no hanashi" (A Tale of Two Artists) by Tanizaki Junichirō, "Shimon" (The Fingerprint) by Satō Haruo, and "Kaika no satsujin" (An Enlightened Murderer) by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke all appeared in the August 1918 edition of *Chūō Kōron*.

It should be no surprise that *ero* and *guro* were combined in one phrase first, since *ero* frequently overlapped with *guro*. Indeed, detective fiction often featured erotic descriptions of murder suspects or victims. But one important author and publisher of *ero-guro*, Umehara Hokumei, helped cement the connection between *ero* and *guro*. He began his career writing leftist pieces and publishing the leftist arts magazine, *Arts Market* (*Bungei Shijō*) while also publishing articles that capitalized on the commercial appeal of the erotic and the grotesque. He advertised works on topics such as Edo Period erotic books and the Kama Sutra in top papers and sold on subscription only in an attempt to avoid trouble with the police for violating censorship laws. Nevertheless, he was fined and imprisoned and eventually moved to Shanghai in 1927 in an attempt to evade authorities.²³ His magazine *Grotesque* ran from 1928 to 1931, and combined articles on contemporary dance hall culture with histories of exotic European criminal punishments, and bibliographies of what he called “hermaphrodite literature” with tales of the women living in the shogun’s “Inner Chambers.”²⁴ Mark Driscoll describes the magazine as “the first strictly *erotic-grotesque* medium” since it popularized the connection between *ero* and *guro*; after *Gurotesuku*, earlier works by Tanizaki, Ranpo, and other writers were retroactively categorized as *ero-guro* and later magazines like *Hanzai Kagaku* (*Criminal Science*) were strongly influenced by its approach.²⁵

²³ Mori, 15-16; Takeuchi, 6-9.

²⁴ See *Gurotesuku*, October 1928 and March 1929. Throughout the Edo Period, the Tokugawa Shoguns kept a large number of concubines in the *Ōku* (Inner Chambers). Tale from the Inner Chambers could be both erotic and subversive of state power, in so far as they might criticize the Tokugawa government, but were more likely to be permitted by early Shōwa censors since the stories arguably had historical value and did not directly critique the present Imperial government.

²⁵ Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan’s Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 183.

Umehara's work appealed to a widespread interest in sexology among intellectuals, as well as particular concern over deviance and perversion.²⁶ Because his magazine was influential in establishing what *guro* was, his work cemented the connection between *ero* and *guro* which had begun in detective fiction. Other stories in *Grotesque* served to expand the boundaries of what might be considered mysterious or unsettling, such as anthropological articles on the customs of primitive tribes or an illustrated history of European privies. These stories had the added effect of positioning potential colonial subjects as barbaric and positively equating Japanese and European historical customs.

Nansensu is the most difficult of the three terms to pin down. It is often understood to encompass on one hand, incomprehensible ideas from abroad, and on the other, comic acts, variety shows, and dance reviews.²⁷ Nevertheless, the apparent meaninglessness of *nansensu* often concealed political dissent and calls for economic reform. For example, a historical article about a wrongly convicted European criminal could indirectly comment on a recent miscarriage of justice in Japan. Moreover, both Mark Driscoll and Miriam Silverberg have argued that *ero-guro-nansensu* served as a Marxist critique of Japanese capitalist modernity.²⁸ Indeed, censorship law in Japan drew strong connections between protecting society from obscene material and preventing the spread of politically dangerous ideas. As a result, erotic content could

²⁶ For further discussion of sexology in Japan during the 1920s, see Sabine Fruhstuck, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) and Mark Driscoll, "Seeds and (Nest) Eggs of Empire: Sexology Manuals/ Manual Sexology" in *Gendering Modern Japan*, ed. by Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

²⁷ Mori, 24-26.

²⁸ Mark Driscoll, 7; Silverberg, 5-7.

serve a dual purpose of titillating readers and criticizing state policy. Nevertheless, any direct relationship between the Proletarian Art and literature movements of the late 1920s and *nansensu* is problematic at best, since many Japanese Marxists thought *ero-guro-nansensu* was merely bourgeois decadence and *ero-guro-nansensu* magazines seemed more interested in making a voyeuristic spectacle of the suffering and sex lives of the poor than generating sympathy for their condition. Insofar as there was a consistent politics of *nansensu*, it was a categorical opposition to censorship. Meaningless nonsense was often the direct result of state censorship. Magazines would often preemptively censor potentially objectionable articles with blank space or with each individual character replaced by ○, △, or × symbol. While a reader might be able to guess the meaning of limited redactions, extensive redactions could erase the meaning of a text, reducing it to nonsense. Indeed, the decision to draw attention to censorship, even without making a direct comment on it, served as a critique of the practice. Similarly, magazine editors often presented series of photos without comment, leaving readers to form their own interpretation of what the sequence was intended to convey, and printed writing and art that defied a clear interpretation.

This study will focus primarily on sources that are widely considered *ero-guro*. Umehara Hokumei's *ero-guro* magazine *Grotesque*, as well as the magazines *Hentai Shiryō* (*Perverse Materials*), *Bungei Shijō* (*Arts Market*), and the novel *Satsujin Kaisha* (*Murder Inc.*), were influential beyond relatively limited circulation numbers.²⁹ It is clear from the contents that Umehara assumed his audience was well-educated; in contrast

²⁹ Takeuchi, 204- 227. Most Japanese publishers do not give specific circulation figures and it is rarely possible to find concrete sales figures.

to other popular magazines, *Grotesque* did not include *furigana*, phonetic glosses for Chinese kanji, despite being written with many unusual characters. Tanaka Naoki founded the magazine *Hanzai Kagaku* (*Criminal Science*) in 1930, taking his inspiration from contemporary books and magazines showcasing modern mass culture such as *Nihon kindai bungaku daijiten* (*Great Encyclopedia of Japanese Modern Culture*) and *Bungakukai* (*Literary World*) that were published during the *enpon* (one yen book) boom of the late 1920s. Early issues of *Criminal Science* emphasized true crime, criminal psychology, the law, and forensic science before later issues featured *ero-guro* elements like abnormal psychology and the science of sexual desire. Actual circulation figures are unknown, though supposedly the September 1930 issue sold out seven editions.³⁰ Prior to *Criminal Science*, one of the most important venues for publishing detective fiction was *Shinseinen* (*New Youth*), which began publication in 1920. It initially targeted rural youth but later shifted focus to young urban men, enjoying a circulation of around 30,000 during the 1920s. The magazine's editors saw detective fiction as an important way to address the economic and social upheavals of modern Japan, first publishing translations of Western detective stories, featuring popular heroes like Sexton Blake and Arsène Lupin, before shifting to original Japanese works. There was often overlap between editors, writers, and readers; for example, Edogawa Ranpo began as an enthusiastic reader before his first story was published in the magazine in 1924.³¹ *Ero-guro* stories and articles occasionally appeared in mainstream

³⁰ Baba Nobuhiko, "'Toshi no jidai' o kakenuketa zasshi 'Hanzai kagaku' no yakuwari," in *'Hanzai kagaku' kaisetsu sōmoku roku sakuin* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 2008), 7-13.

³¹ Kyoko Omori, "Detecting Japanese Vernacular Modernism: Shinseinen Magazine and the Development of the Tantei Shosetsu Genre, 1920-1931," (PhD Diss., Ohio State University, 2003), <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/>, 99-101.

literary magazines during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, including *Chūō Kōron* (*The Central Review*), *Fujin Kōron* (*The Women's Review*), *Kaizō* (*Reconstruction*), and *Shinshōsetsu* (*The New Novel*); in addition, these magazines offer context to the broader concerns that *ero-guro* discourses addressed. I have included examples from less well-known *ero-guro* magazines such as *Gendai ryōki sentan zukan* (*An illustrated Guide to the Ultramodern Bizarre*) and *Hentai fūzoku gakan* (*An Illustrated Guide to Abnormal Manners and Customs*). I have also cited film magazines from the Makino Collection held by Columbia University.

Scholarly Literature

Despite the prevalence of *ero-guro* aesthetics throughout the Taishō and early Showa Eras, there have been few works on *ero-guro* discourses in Japan. Even at the height of *ero-guro* culture, Tyler observes that “the image of *modanizumu* [*ero-guro-nansensu*] promote[d], though exciting, is superficial or derivative . . . for the ultranationalists, modernism was too *modan*, alien and subversive of Japanese tradition. For Marxists and practitioners of proletarian literature, it was not *izumu* or ideological enough to contribute to the class struggle and bring about revolutionary change.”³² Works heavily influenced by *ero-guro-nansensu* have historically been dismissed by Japanese literary critics as too lowbrow to be worthy of study, although recently there has been more interest in works by the most popular authors.³³ One such

³² William J. Tyler, “Introduction,” in *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction From Japan*, ed. by William Tyler (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 5.

³³ William J. Tyler, “Introduction: making sense of nansensu,” *Japan Forum* 21 (2009): 5-6.

scholar, Takeuchi Mizuho, first encountered the *ero-guro* influenced magazine *Hentai Shinri* (*Abnormal Psychology*) while studying literature in graduate school, and on seeing the lack of serious scholarly attention to *hentai* (perversion), made it the subject of her graduate research.³⁴ Her interest has inspired the formation of the Metamorphosis Research Group (*Metamokenkyūkai*) who write on *ero-guro* subjects. Because *ero-guro* was initially dismissed by Japanese literary critics at the time, many scholars remain unaware of it today, and as a result, much of the research group's work is committed to presenting *ero-guro* mass culture to new audiences.³⁵ Similarly, Mori Masato contends that *ero-guro-nansensu* is a “missing link” in the history of Japanese pop music and emphasizes the importance of *ero* in popular songs sung by women.³⁶ At present, there is a renewed interest in *ero-guro-nansensu* mass culture among Japanese scholars. This dissertation will argue that *ero-guro* discourses are not merely superficial or derivative but show how educated, urban men expressed, and found ways to resolve, address, or compensate for the anxieties of modern life.

Modernity and Modernism

Modernity remains an unsettled historical topic: what is it, when did it happen, and where did it begin? How is it related to modernization and modernism? Modernity

³⁴ Takeuchi Mizuho, “*Hentai*” to *iu bunka: kindai nihon no “chiisana kakumei,”* *Queer Rebels: A History of HENTAI Culture in Modern Japan*, (Tokyo: Hitsuji shobō, 2014), 13-14.

³⁵ Takeuchi, 246, 299-300; see also Takeuchi and Metamo kenkyūkai, ‘*Hentai*’ *Nijyūmensō*.

³⁶ Mori, 42. The importance of popular music in modern mass culture was also noted by Ichikawa Kōichi in “Hayariuta ni miru modanizumu to *ero guro nansensu*,” in *Nihon modanizumu no kenkyū: shisō seikatsu bunka*, ed. by Minami Hiroshi, (Tokyo: Burein shuppatsu, 1982), 257-284.

can simply mean the chronologically now or recent, and while historians usually consider the modern to have begun at the turn of the nineteenth century, there is some dispute whether it has been supplanted by the postmodern.³⁷ Modernism is a cultural, often artistic or literary, response to the experience of modernity. Marshall Berman proposed a broad and inclusive definition: “modernism [is] any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it.”³⁸ Modernization concerns the development of economic, technological, and political institutions; while modernization theory was influential in the middle of the twentieth century, its assumptions about the relative development of nations have been critiqued and fallen out of favor.³⁹ Initially, most scholars took for granted that modernity began in the West and then spread to the rest of the world, but after postcolonial scholars contested the teleological assumptions of modernization theory, as well as existing ideas of modernity and modernism, a new model was needed.

One theory to replace the idea that modernity radiated out from the West to the rest has produced the concepts of “alternative” or “multiple” modernities, but these concepts have been criticized for focusing attention on the diversity of the modern experience at the expense of understanding it as a global phenomenon. Harry Harootunian has argued against modernization theory, and more generally, the assumption that non-Western “late developers” exist in a sort of time lag. He sees

³⁷ “Introduction,” *The American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 631–637.

³⁸ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 5.

³⁹ “Introduction,” 631–637.

Japan's modernity as "an inflection of a larger global process that constituted what might be called co-existing or co-eval modernity." Co-eval modernity suggests that all countries shared the same temporality while also allowing for local differences in experience.⁴⁰ Similarly, Carol Gluck argues that modernity was a global phenomenon with local manifestations, rather than a process originating in the West or existing in "alternative" forms. She suggests that historians think of modernities as "historical blends," in which a choice of historical precedents, modern technologies, and cultural ideas results in something new. This metaphor "liberates the globeful of modern histories from confining comparisons with an always already modern Europe," while also accounting for moments of historical blending in the West.⁴¹

Other scholars of Japanese modernity and modernism also argue against the idea that "authentic" modernity began in the West and spread outwards. William Gardner observes that Japanese critics recognized that the modern West could only recognize its own modernity through encounters with the supposedly pre-modern non-West. Moreover, the assumption that the West was the first site of a fully-realized modernity produces a tendency to read non-Western modernities in terms of absence or lack. The works of Japanese modernist writers and artists are then reduced to a kind of colonial mimicry, or as one critic quoted by Gardner termed Yokomitsu Riichi's modernist literature, "a parody written by a schoolboy."⁴² Similarly, Erin Schoneveld points out that originality has been a longstanding problem for Japanese artists. While

⁴⁰ Harootunian, xvi-xvii.

⁴¹ Carol Gluck, "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now," *The American Historical Review* 116 (2011): 676- 687.

⁴² Gardner, 13-17.

a French artist in the late nineteenth century could find inspiration in a contemporary Japanese work or one from ancient Greece, non-Western artists are seen as either imitating the past or imitating the West. Schoneveld argues that “we must deconstruct the Eurocentric concept of originality and re-theorize it within a transnational global context.”⁴³ One important reason to study *ero-guro* is that while some elements of the genre, like detective fiction or psychological studies, were directly influenced by the West, *ero-guro-nansensu* as a whole has no direct equivalent outside of Japan. Thus studying *ero-guro* can reveal the anxieties of Japanese modernity while also showing the culturally specific ways writers and artists responded to them.

The Detective in the Modern City

Theorists have long associated the rise of the detective novel with the development of urban modernity. The detective used observation and logic to reconstruct the story of crimes in a process that paralleled the desire of detective fiction readers to make order and sense out of modern social processes. By the 1920s and 1930s, members of the Frankfurt School writing in Weimar Germany had already begun to theorize how detective fiction responded to modernity. For example, Walter Benjamin described the urban bourgeois as desperate to make an impression against the absence of any trace of the individual in the city; the detective “inquires into these traces

⁴³ Erin Schoneveld, *Shirakaba and Japanese Modernism: Art Magazines, Artistic Collectives, and the Early Avant-garde* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2009), 15-16.

and follows these tracks.”⁴⁴ Similarly, Siegfried Kracauer saw the detective as uncovering secrets and constructing a comprehensible narrative of modern life: “just as the detective discovers the secret that people have concealed, the detective novel discloses in the aesthetic medium the secret of a society bereft of reality, as well as the secret of its insubstantial marionettes. The composition of the detective novel transforms an ungraspable life into a translatable analogue of actual reality.”⁴⁵ The idea that the detective novel was recreating a lost sense of individual identity or a reconstructing a comprehensible environment has been taken up by a number of more recent scholars as well. Tom Gunning has called attention to the importance of photography as the ideal clue, indexing both evidence of the crime and the identity of the criminal in free-floating systems of mobility and circulation.⁴⁶ In cities where many residents did not know each other and the state could not effectively keep track of criminals living under assumed identities, the photograph could identify circulating criminals and provide proof of guilt - though many detective stories complicated such assumptions. Moreover, detective fiction can be understood as part of the system of sensational and distracting popular amusements that compensated readers for constant shocks of urban modernity.⁴⁷

Detective fiction (*tantei shosetsu*) is widely recognized by Japanese scholars as

⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 20.

⁴⁵ Siegfried Krakauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 175.

⁴⁶ Tom Gunning, “Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. by Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 19-20.

⁴⁷ See Ben Singer, “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, 72-95.

an early site of *ero-guro* aesthetics.⁴⁸ Indeed, the “*tantei*” simply describes investigative acts and was closely related to *ryōki*, or curiosity-seeking, stories, where the protagonist wandered the streets of a city looking for ever more stimulating things to excite their jaded tastes - a kind of *ero-guro* flaneur.⁴⁹ Two recent studies of detective fiction by Mark Silver and Satoru Saito trace the development of the Japanese detective novel beginning in the Meiji period and ending with Edogawa Ranpo. Silver emphasizes the act of cultural borrowing implicit in Japanese crime novels, and while he at times reaches beyond a paradigm of imitation, his story is one of asymmetrical influence. He simplistically characterizes Ranpo’s works as defined by a sense of inadequacy vis-a-vis the West.⁵⁰ In contrast, Saito argues that detective stories, defined by the subject position of the detective working to understand the Other, were intimately connected with the development of the modern novel in Japan. Moreover, these works demonstrated how Western knowledge could be used for the good of the nation.⁵¹ Detective novels were a key site of early *ero-guro* discourses, and their role in shaping subjective reactions to modernity has not been fully appreciated. I argue that detective fiction helped readers compensate for the anxiety produced by modern urban life by teaching readers how to order and categorize city life while also delivering safe excitement and stimulus.

⁴⁸ Mori, 23-24; Takeuchi, 268.

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Angles, “Seeking the Strange: ‘Ryōki’ and the Navigation of Normality in Interwar Japan” *Monumenta Nipponica* 63, no. 1, (2008): 127-132.

⁵⁰ Mark Silver, *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

⁵¹ Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2-7, 238-245.

Women, Modernism, and Mass Culture

Many scholars have addressed the symbolic role of women in modernist writing and in the relationship between modernity and mass culture. Rita Felski notes that although images of women are important symbolic figures in efforts to understand modernity, previous studies of modernity have focused on male agents. To give one prominent example, she observes that Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* focuses on a cast of male writers: Goethe, Marx, and Baudelaire. She also criticizes Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's readings of modern mass culture for failing to see any agency, resistance, or emancipatory change.⁵² For example, the modern consumer was represented as a woman - exemplified by Gustave Flaubert's *Emma Bovary*. Consumption of goods became an acceptable form of female desire, even as the gendering of consumption as female was used to criticize the commodification of modern life. Nevertheless, consumer capitalism also let women have individual expression through the goods they chose.⁵³ Much of women's role seems to be a source of anxiety for male modernist writers. Indeed, as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write, "women seemed to be agents of an alien world that evoked anger and anguish."⁵⁴ Similarly, Andreas Huyssen argues that modernist writers identified mass culture, and the masses themselves, with femininity. He writes that "a specific

⁵² Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2-6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 61-89.

⁵⁴ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1988), 4.

traditional male image of woman served as a receptacle for all kinds of projections, displaced fears, and anxieties (both personal and political), which were brought about by modernization and the new social conflicts.⁵⁵ Scholars have worked to recover signs of women's agency within modern mass culture while also highlighting women's symbolic role in modernist writing.

Miriam Silverberg's *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The Mass Culture of Modern Times* envisions women as the central agents of her study of Japanese modernity, as well as a symbol of male anxiety. Silverberg uses a variety of sources, from fiction to ladies' magazines, to describe the mass culture experience of 1920s-1930s Japan. She argues that erotic grotesque nonsense showed the vitality, deprivation, and political satire, respectively, present in Japanese culture.⁵⁶ Popular culture is important because it circulated meaning through consumption; people formed a new modern subjectivity by creatively consuming goods and cultural products and thereby forming new meanings for themselves.⁵⁷ The strength of Silverberg's work lies in its willingness to take consumer culture seriously, observing that the producers of modern culture were also consumers participating in networks of shared meaning. She emphasizes the importance of *moga* (modern girls), cafe waitresses, and housewives as key agents in the production and consumption of modern mass culture. In particular, the *moga* appeared to be a creation of critics anxious over women's new economic power and sexual freedom more than an accurate representation of women.⁵⁸ I build on her

⁵⁵ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 52.

⁵⁶ Silverberg, xv.

⁵⁷ Silverberg, 4-7, 31.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 51-54.

analysis of gender relationships in *ero-guro* mass culture by showing how discourses around cinema actresses allowed male writers to express anxiety over women's new public roles as well as Western dominance of global cinema culture.

Abnormal Psychology and Perception

One of the central concerns of the *ero-guro* aesthetic was the nature of perception. Modes of perception changed in response to the development of global modernity. Discussing Western culture, Jonathan Crary argues that modern subjectivity was fundamentally different from classical models. Vision and other senses were theorized as subjective rather than objective, and classical models of a stable subject with mental unity collapsed. New models of perception and attention became a central concern of artists, philosophers, and scientists; and while Crary uses perception in his later work to include all forms of stimulus, vision was particularly important.⁵⁹ Looking at Japan, William O. Gardner has observed that modernist writers Kitagawa Fuyuhiko and Yokomitsu Riichi were both interested in the ability of the cinematic apparatus to capture the temporality of objects and perception as well as to create a new synthetic whole from a montage of images.⁶⁰ Yokomitsu was one of the founders of the *Shinkankakuha*, or New Sensationist, group, who took inspiration from Western avant-garde movements

⁵⁹ See Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999) and Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990).

⁶⁰ William O. Gardner, "Japanese Modernism and 'Cine-Text': Fragment and Flow at Empire's Edge in Kitagawa Fuyuhiko and Yokomitsu Riichi," in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), <http://oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195338904.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195338904>.

including Futurism, Dadaism, and Surrealism and sought to represent sensorial experience in their art, particularly vision.⁶¹ Indeed, one of the best examples of the Shinkankakuha's efforts to understand subjective perception and the cinema is the film *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta Ippeiji*, 1926). Set in an insane asylum, the film renders on screen the subjective perceptual experiences of the inmates and staff, associating the fragmented perception under modernity with cinematic montage and the delusions of the asylum's inmates.

The linkage between modern subjectivity and perception and its representation in modernist works has been made by a number of scholars of Western modernity. Louis Sass famously claimed that the madness of schizophrenia may be an extreme manifestation of the hyper-consciousness of modernity.⁶² More recently, Andrew Gaedtke proposes that the similarities between psychotic delusion, technological media, and literary modernism are due to the form and logic of a "technological paranoia" - the mind was reconstructed as an informatic machine, subject to the unconscious mechanisms uncovered by psychoanalysis. Moreover, modernist writing offered a way to manage the pervasive sense of ontological crisis through narrative. Thus, the disjunctures and formal experimentation of literary modernism helped manage the feelings of disorientation and reordered perception.⁶³ And to give a non-Western example, Kaira Cabañas makes the case that the art of asylum patients in Brazil played

⁶¹ *Shinkankakuha* has been translated as New Sensationist group, New Perceptionist group, and New Impressionist group in English language studies, all of which are reasonable translations. I will refer to the group as the *Shinkankakuha* to avoid confusion.

⁶² Louis A. Sass, *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1992), 8-10.

⁶³ Andrew Gaedtke, *Modernism and the Machinery of Madness: Psychosis, Technology, and Narrative Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 2-10.

a key role in leading art critics' construction of aesthetic modernism and its acceptance at museums and exhibitions.⁶⁴

Writers and critics in Japan also looked to madness and mental illness for insight into modern subjectivity. During the 1920s, there was a publishing boom in both academic and popular psychology journals and the term *hentai* became an important subject of analysis in *ero-guro* media. Kanno Satomi notes that *hentai* initially had the sense of a living thing such as an insect undergoing transformation, but then gained an additional meaning of “abnormal” at the end of the Meiji Period, and later became associated with sexual abnormality during the Taishō Period.⁶⁵ *Hentai* could encompass subjects ranging from spiritualism to studies of psychology and mental disorders.⁶⁶ Drawing on Michel Foucault's work on sexuality, Takeuchi Mizuho argues for the importance of discourses surrounding sex and deviance in both defining and rebelling against power structures in society.⁶⁷ While some discourses of *hentai*, or perverse, sexuality did draw on Western sexology, Mark Driscoll argues that Japanese authors did not completely adopt Western repression, challenging assumptions that homosexuality was inherently bad and that women did not normally experience sexual desire.⁶⁸ Despite *hentai* initially appearing in discourses about psychology and sexuality, *ero-guro* magazine publishers like Miyatake Gaikotsu expanded the meaning of *hentai* to include knowledge of the strange and unusual. At the same time, Umehara

⁶⁴ Kaira M. Cabañas, *Learning from Madness: Brazilian Modernism and Global Contemporary Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 6-9

⁶⁵ Satomi Kanno, *'Hentai' no jidai*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2005), 8-11.

⁶⁶ See *'Hentai' Nijyūmensō* for examples.

⁶⁷ Takeuchi Mizuho, “*Hentai*” to *iu bunka*, 13-14.

⁶⁸ Mark Driscoll, “Seed and (Nest) Eggs of Empire: Sociology Manuals / Manual Sexology”; Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque*, 149-200.

Hokumei used the publication of sexually perverse *hentai* to argue against the legitimacy of censorship laws he found oppressive.⁶⁹ Although discourses of *hentai* within *ero-guro* often emphasized deviant sex, *ero-guro* writers and editors also wrote about experiences of mental illness, drug use, and neurasthenia, to list a few examples. Representations of madness and disordered perception in psychology magazines and *ero-guro* writing and films offered a number of compensations for mental anxiety and distress: the prevalence of conditions like neurasthenia proved that Japan was modern, new psychological disorders accompanied advancement in human development, and experiences of disordered mental states indicated new techniques for representing the psychological experience of modernity.

Primitivism and the Savage Other

Many scholars have deconstructed artistic and literary tropes of primitivism as well as scholarly ethnographic works and examined their role within modern culture. Marianna Torgovnik observes that early twentieth century ethnographers and psychoanalysts, including Bronislaw Malinowski, Havelock Ellis, James Frazer, and Sigmund Freud believed that primitive societies served as a laboratory or testing ground where Western thinkers could discover universal truths about human nature and sexuality. Ethnographic writing inevitably gives way to tropes and images of the primitive, an Other to what the writer wants to contrast against civilized society.

⁶⁹ Kanno, 142-148.

Furthermore, these tropes of the primitive were present in pop culture sources, like Edgar Rice Burroughs Tarzan novels and films.⁷⁰ Similarly, Fatimah Tobing Rony analyzes the conventional framing of ethnographic cinema in the early twentieth century, observing how supposedly scientific and objective representational tropes shaped both scientific and popular films, like King Kong. She also asks whether there is a possibility for non-white viewers to use such films to develop new modes of self-representation.⁷¹ At the same time, the savage other was not necessarily a negative counterpart to modernity; French Modernist writers and artists who found urban life decrepit, inauthentic, and spiritually depleted recovered a vitalizing energy in *négrophilie*, a fascination with blackness that served as signifier for otherness.⁷² In short, ethnography and primitivism often reveal a great deal more about the supposedly modern culture producing them.

Japanese modernists also participated in these discourses, but from a position that did not fully align with the West or with the societies that served as the object of Western ethnography. On one hand, Seiji M. Lippit argues that the cosmopolitanism of Taishō literature and culture required the exclusion of Japanese imperialism; for example, the influential *Shirakaba* (*White Birch*) modernist art and literature journal referenced domestic political events during its run from 1910-1923 but ignored issues

⁷⁰ Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 7, 23.

⁷¹ Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996), 6-8.

⁷² Carole Sweeney, *From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919-1935* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 1-5.

directly related to imperialism.⁷³ But this was not true of all modernist writers in Japan. Robert Tierney studies how the tropes of savagery and the tropics functioned within Japanese colonial literature. He observes that the savage helped Japanese authors understand themselves as modern Japanese, often mimicking the tropes Western authors used to justify imperialism and deprive other cultures of sovereignty. However, Japanese authors also saw themselves as part of a broader Pan-Asian spectrum, unlike Western authors who drew clear lines between colonizer and colonized.⁷⁴ In addition, Mark Driscoll attempts to theorize the role of Japanese imperialism within *ero-guro* mass culture. Driscoll combines Marxism, postcolonial theory, and Foucaultian biopolitics to argue that Japan's power relied on the constituent energy released by desiring, deterritorialized bodies.⁷⁵ In other words, the Japanese empire consumed the physical bodies of colonial subjects in labor projects and drug use to fuel modernization and expansion. However, Driscoll's emphasis on state exploitation and his Marxist, postcolonial approach tends to ignore individual agency, especially for women and colonial subjects. Moreover, he often misrepresents the content and tenor of his sources.⁷⁶ Despite these flaws, Driscoll's book compellingly argues for the importance of

⁷³ Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 13-16.

⁷⁴ Robert Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2010), 1-33.

⁷⁵ Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque*, ix-xii.

⁷⁶ In his discussion of Edogawa Ranpo's *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*, he describes the wife of the man whose identity the protagonist stole as "suspect[ing] something is strange after their first erotic 'little death' subsequent to the faked 'big death' that widowed her" when in the story the protagonist wants to have sex with the wife but cannot because he is afraid she will find his secret. Similarly, he says that the fantasy island has unemployed people who "willingly suicide themselves into statues or surgically hybridize with animals" when in the story it is quite clear they are actors in costumes who leave and find other jobs after the protagonist runs out of money, 211. This may seem minor, but Driscoll's more extreme take eliminates the sympathy towards the protagonist's psychosis that is possible up until he commits murder. See Edogawa Ranpo, *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*, translated by Elaine Kazu Gerbert (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013). He also interprets what sounds to me like sensationalist

the colonies in understanding Japanese mass culture in the early twentieth century. In this dissertation, I examine how *ero-guro* discourses reshaped how intellectuals viewed China in the 1920s and early 1930s: initially, writers acknowledged shared intellectual traditions and the problem of global imperialism that faced both nations, but by the early 1930s, China was embodied by images of inept rulers, opium eaters, and cannibals. I argue that articles about cannibalism and ethnographic images alleviated unspoken fears that Japan was not yet firmly in the “civilized” category.

Censorship and Modernism

This dissertation will also show how state censorship influenced *ero-guro-nansensu* modernism. Celia Marshik argues that censorship led British Modernists to articulate their aesthetic goals, engage in self-censorship, and include irony and satire in their works.⁷⁷ Building on her argument, Rachel Potter observes that legal repression gave the obscene words and images in modernist art and literature a transgressive energy. Moreover, the varied network of printers, postmen, publishers, vice crusaders, editors, and librarians who pushed for bans on work shaped the legal challenges and aesthetic arguments used to oppose it, with writers and artists often complaining that the people enforcing censorship laws knew nothing about the literature and art they were censoring.⁷⁸ In Great Britain, most works were tried for obscenity

pulp literature, such as the diaries of pimp Muraoka Iheiji and drug trafficker Gionbou, as more or less factual.

⁷⁷ Celia Marshik, *British Modernism and Censorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 4-5.

⁷⁸ Rachel Potter, *Obscene Modernism: Literary Censorship and Experiment, 1900-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4-5, 13.

under the Obscene Publications Bill following its 1868 legal interpretation; in the United States, laws and prosecutions took place at the state level because of the First Amendment right to free speech.⁷⁹ Both Marshik and Potter note that the lack of a clear definition of obscenity forced authors and editors to argue for where the line of social acceptability ought to be, defending the presence of sexual content in art. The presence of obscene content could give a work international notoriety and a shocking edge but could also cost publishers money if a book was banned.

In contrast, Japanese censorship laws allowed bureaucrats working for the Home Ministry to ban works for obscenity as well as sedition. Gregory Kasza's book, *The State and Mass Media in Japan, 1918-1945*, offers detailed descriptions of Japanese censorship laws and how the laws functioned in practice, alongside comparisons with contemporary Western censorship codes for context. Though he is not specifically concerned with the effect of censorship on modernist literature, his work points to the very different situation for modernist writers and artists in Japan. Throughout the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1868) and Meiji Era (1868-1912), the interests of the state in banning obscene or seditious material were privileged over the rights of individuals to freely express themselves. The Japanese constitution, promulgated in 1889, did not specifically guarantee a right to free speech, instead specifying that "Japanese subjects shall, within the limits of the law, enjoy the liberty of speech, writing, publication, public meetings, and associations." In practice, the Japanese Diet passed the 1909 Newspaper Law and 1926 Peace Preservation Law that allowed government officials

⁷⁹ Ibid., 16-17.

working in the Home Ministry to impose fines and jail time and confiscate copies of obscene or politically dangerous material.⁸⁰ Thus, writers could find their works banned for violating the public order (*chitsujo binran*) if it appeared politically dangerous or for corrupting public morals (*fūzoku kairan*) if it was considered obscene. Some arguments against censorship were common to both Japan and the West; for example, writers complained that the people doing the censoring were disconnected from art and literature. Building on Kasza's work, Jonathan Abel's study of the archives of Japanese censors shows that censorship itself spurred cultural production both for and against the practice. Moreover, he also observes that the archives of the censors often preserved the supposedly dangerous cultural products that the censors had banned.⁸¹ But unlike in the Anglo-American world, Japanese editors and writers often knew which officials would oversee their work and consulted directly with the censors to avoid fines or confiscations. For example, Hiromu Nagahara has shown that Ogawa Chikagorō, the Home Ministry official in charge of censoring phonograph records from 1934 to 1942, participated in critical debates over the type of music that ought to be produced in Japan.⁸² But on the whole, censors played a greater role in the production of music and film than printed materials. Both records and films were comparatively expensive to produce and had to be approved by censors before release. Production companies frequently consulted with censors because they did not want to lose money on a project.

⁸⁰ Gregory Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan, 1918-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 6-12, 41.

⁸¹ Jonathan Abel, *Redacted: The Archives of Censorship in Transwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

⁸² Hiromu Nagahara, *Tokyo Boogie-woogie: Japan's Pop Era and its Discontents* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 66-107.

By contrast, the amount of printed material was too great for censors to consult with publishers individually. Umehara Hokumei, as well as other *ero-guro* publishers and authors, used the potential censorship of their works to gain notoriety and generate excitement even as the threat of censorship shaped the anti-government stance of his works.

The influence of censorship has also complicated analysis of the relationship between *ero-guro-nansensu* and the political left among Japanese historians and critics. Both *ero-guro* and the Proletarian Arts Movement, which promoted Marxism and leftist values through art and literature, reached their height at the end of the 1920s and beginning of the 1930s. Many works had characteristics of both movements, and people like Umehara Hokumei participated in both. Adachi Gen argues that there was a deep relationship between the Proletarian Arts Movement and *ero-guro-nansensu* for two reasons: first, the contents of the two movements were similar, and second, the two publishers Umehara and Shimoda Kenichiro were central to both movements. He observes that manga artists in both movements criticised capitalism, made jokes about class warfare, and emphasized women as objects of erotic desire. In addition, both movements came to an end with the rise of militarism and nationalism in the early 1930s.⁸³ Similarly, Takeuchi cites Itō Ken's collection of detective stories, *Shanghai Night Stories (Shanghai yawa)*, as evidence of the intersection between popular *ero-guro* and the expression of leftist values through literature.⁸⁴

However, simply observing similarities between *ero-guro* and the Proletarian Arts

⁸³ Adachi Gen, "Puroretaria bijutsu to ero guro nansensu," *Kindai gasetu* 15 (2006): 16-35.

⁸⁴ Takeuchi, "Hentai" to iu bunka, 256-257.

Movement erases the complicated relationship between the two. For example, Edwin Michielsen argues that Itō's *Shanghai Night Stories* was a conscious effort by a Marxist writer to use the popularity of detective fiction to show readers the crimes committed by capitalism.⁸⁵ The relationship between the Proletarian Arts Movement and *ero-guro-nansensu* was clearly complicated. Fundamentally, Marxist writers saw class and economic concerns as the most important problem and the development of socialist class consciousness as the answer, while *ero-guro* writers addressed anxieties ranging from urbanization to changing gender roles in general without proposing a clear political solution. Nevertheless, the constant threat of censorship for political or moral grounds frustrated publishers and writers associated with both movements. I argue here that the dominant politics of *ero-guro-nansensu* was opposition to censorship and excessive authoritarianism, and that this interplay was made into an entertaining game by people like Umehara Hokumei.

Historicizing Emotions

Since this study will analyze how anxiety is understood and represented within *ero-guro* discourses, it is important to examine how historians can usefully think about emotions. William Reddy has examined the work of both cognitive psychologists and anthropologists, and proposes that emotions are a kind of cognitive translation in which

⁸⁵ Edwin Michielsen, "A Marxist Sherlock Holmes: Itō Ken and the Proletarian Detective in 1920s Shanghai," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 17, no. 6:(2019), accessed April 4, 2019, <https://apjif.org/2019/06/Michielsen.html>.

a cognitive and biological experience is named and understood in language.⁸⁶ This definition recognizes both the biologically grounded experience of an emotion as well as the important role of language in formulating an individual understanding of an emotion. Reddy also puts forward the idea of an “emotive,” a speech act that can describe an emotional state of the speaker, form a relation towards or about another person, or contain exploratory or altering emotional effects.⁸⁷ A statement describing one’s emotional state is more than just naming a pre-existing sensation; speaking an emotion can and does shape the experience of an emotion. Moreover, Reddy’s definition is sufficiently open-ended to account for unnamable emotions, when existing language is inadequate to fully describe an emotional state - for example, Akutagawa’s sense of “vague anxiety.” Most importantly, situating emotions as an interaction between body, mind, action, and social context allows us to conceptualize a change in emotional experience over time.

It is also important to consider both who is speaking their emotions along with the speaker’s intended audience. Barbara Rosenwein’s idea of an “emotional community” is particularly useful in understanding how an individual’s emotional expression is shaped by society. Emotional communities often overlap with social communities, but the researcher examines “systems of feeling: what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them; the valuations they make about others’ emotions; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect,

⁸⁶ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 64.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 106-111.

encourage, tolerate, and deplore.”⁸⁸ An emotional community does not fully determine how an individual experiences and expresses an emotion, but rather promotes certain types of emotional expression and understanding over others. As with social communities, an individual may belong to a number of emotional communities, and the relative influence and power of a given emotional community may change over time. The construct of emotional communities highlights an important source of emotional distress for this particular group - for example, the contradiction between emotional styles in Medieval and Early Modern Japanese literature and Realist and Naturalist works coming out of the West. Rosenwein’s points out the important influence of audience and social context in the way people express emotions.

In order to understand the interaction of individual experience and social context in emotional expressions, Monique Scheer proposes practice theory as an analytic tool for studying the history of emotions. Practice theory is a combination of doings and sayings; it includes both conscious, intentional acts as well as unconscious, habitual behavior; and it considers together both bodily sensations and learned, culturally specific acts.⁸⁹ For example, the rise of romantic narratives in Bollywood films popularized the English phrase “I love you” in Hindi dialog, effectively introducing a new emotional expression into the context of courtship and marriage. The goal is to avoid reproducing assumptions about emotion in the source material as well as from one’s own situatedness when examining fictional representations, first-person accounts, and

⁸⁸ Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying About Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107(2002): 842.

⁸⁹ Monique Scheer, “Are emotions a kind of practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuan approach to understanding emotion,” *History and Theory* 51 (2012): 200.

physical artifacts. Practice theory moves beyond the question of emotional “truth”; the question becomes how and why a historical actor engaged in an emotional performance.⁹⁰ Emotion and the expression of emotions were particularly important in Taishō literary culture. Influenced by naturalist and realist authors like Leo Tolstoy and Henrik Ibsen, writers shared a belief in the significance of subjective feeling as well as the transformative power of expressing emotions in art and literature. This was true in the art world as well: the influential *Shirakaba* art journal (1910-1923) championed individual subjectivity as the most important quality in artists’ work.⁹¹

Indeed, Japanese literary critics have already observed the importance of changing emotions during the Taishō Era. Critic Isoda Kōichi has described the literature of the period as undergoing a “revolution of emotion” (*kanjō kakumei*). He argues that the industrial revolution and urbanization of the Meiji period produced a deep sense of melancholy (*yū’utsu*), exemplified by Satō Haruō’s two stories, “Urban Melancholy” (*Tokai no yū’utsu*) and “Rural Melancholy” (*Denen yū’utsu*). Both stories exemplified the importance of expressing the author’s feelings and the free and artistic lifestyle of the narrator. In “Urban Melancholy,” the protagonist lived in a Western-style house with two dogs and a wife who had been an actress - none of which would have been possible for Meiji writers. However, Satō’s stories also reflected the melancholy behind social change, which Isoda argues was the overall feeling of the period.⁹² Furthermore, authors began to make passionate declarations of desire that went against Meiji Era Confucian morals, and later included expressions of unconscious,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 214-217.

⁹¹ Schoneveld, 44.

⁹² Ishida Kōichi, *Kindai no kanjō kakumei: sakka ronshū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1987), 88-97.

perverse, and eccentric longings.⁹³ For example, playwright Kikuchi Kan was often frustrated by the conflicting values in Japanese theater and realist plays from the West. He wrote: “Watching a kabuki play, the greatest dissatisfaction is that I cannot find any point of harmony between us and the sentiments, ideals, morals, and lifestyles served up at the kabuki theater. Hardly any ideals, morals, or sentiments in kabuki bear resemblance to our own. The way of living is so different from our own that watching characters on stage is vaguely like watching Hottentots.”⁹⁴ The rapid change in all aspects of life, from material culture to personal relationships, created widespread feelings of alienation and discontent. *Ero-guro* discourses show how educated cultural producers looked for positive and enjoyable aspects of modern life within sources of anxiety and unease.

The five chapters of this study each address a theme within *ero-guro* discourses which show a new way of engaging with and finding value within a specific set of anxieties. The chapters follow the chronological order in which each theme first appears; all five themes were present in *ero-guro* magazines like *Grotesque* and *Criminal Science* in the early Shōwa period. Examining each theme in turn shows what questions and sources of anxiety troubled *ero-guro* cultural produces and what compensatory value they found in modern life.

In the first chapter, I discuss the problem of navigating new urban environments. Rapid changes in lifestyle, including mass migration to urban centers along with modern

⁹³ Sadami Suzuki, “Tanizaki Jun’ichirō as Cultural Critic,” *Japan Review* 7 (1996): 23-32.

⁹⁴ Kikuchi Kan, “Engeki Shigi,” in *Shōwa modanizumu o kenin shita otoko: kikuchi kan no bungei · engeki · eiga essei shū* (Tokyo, Japan: Seiryū shuppan kabushiki kaisha, 2009), 183.

technologies like electric lights and commuter trains, created feelings of dislocation and unease. Detective fiction of the 1910s and 1920s represented an important initial strategy for reframing the mystery of the city as comprehensible and safe to readers. Detectives also recovered the traces of individuals, similar to Kon Wajirō's practice of *modernology*, which sought to record and catalog the smallest acts of modern life. Both detective fiction and *modernology* attempted to render urban life intelligible, while allowing the reader to feel mastery and camaraderie in being part of the select group who best understood the new modern environment.

The second chapter focuses on the perception of Western actresses as uniquely "sublime," or ultimately unobtainable objects of intense desire, even as Japanese actresses could only be sublime in fiction. The sublime allowed writers, critics, and film viewers to negotiate the contradictions of both the increasingly public roles available to Japanese women as well as the Pure Film Movement's aim to adopt the representational techniques of Western film in Japanese cinema. Tanizaki Junichiro's stories and novels from the 1910s and 1920s eroticized and fetishized the lack of control viewers had over the actresses who evoked feelings of desire and modern women who defied male control. Framing actresses as "sublime" restored control over their cinematic images to male viewers even as the limits on what made an ordinary woman "sublime" often reinscribed traditional gender roles. In the end, Japanese film producers chose to capitalize instead on the male heroes of sword-fighting period dramas, and viewers treated Japanese actresses as objects of male desire rather than sublime screen stars.

The third chapter on madness and modernity describes the problems of defining what is normal within modern experience. There was widespread popular and academic interest over the category of "*hentai*," meaning abnormal or perverse, which encompassed everything from abnormal psychology to the contours of normal sexuality. *Hentai* included both discussions of how to treat mental illness as well as whether modernity itself was the cause of psychological disorders. At the same time, individual subjective experiences and perception took on an ever increasing importance in art and literature, particularly through the *Shinkankakuha* movement. Both psychologists and writers were seeking compensation for the psychic disruptions of modern life. Within *ero-guro* mass culture, the experiences of mental illness or disordered perception offered evidence of Japan's modernity and new strategies for representing modern psychological states.

The fourth chapter shows how colonial grotesquerie constructs Taiwanese and South Seas natives and China as "savage" points of reference for "civilized" Japan. One common anxiety for urban intellectuals was convincing themselves that Japan was civilized and modern like the West. The recognition of modernity is only possible through repeated comparison with the past; in the same way, claims that a nation can only be civilized and modern require a savage point of comparison. Throughout the Taishō Period, Taiwanese and South Seas natives played an important rhetorical role in establishing Japan's status as civilized and in equating Tokyo with Western capitals of civilization like Paris. China, however, could not immediately be assigned to the category of savage because many Japanese writers had studied classical Chinese

literature, Confucian philosophy, and could not fail to recognize Japan's intellectual debt to China. However, by the latter half of the 1920s, the trope of cannibalism was frequently cited to reintegrate historical China with contemporary China and reconceptualize Chinese culture as uncivilized and barbaric. By 1931-1932, *ero-guro* magazines openly expressed support for Japanese military action in Manchuria. Depictions of cannibalism and savage customs appealed to readers who enjoyed tales of the grotesque and bizarre customs of foreign culture. I argue that it also allowed Japanese intellectuals to see themselves as modern and to relieve anxieties over Japan's place in the world, at the expense of a savage other.

The final chapter on political *nansensu* describes how responses to censorship laws shaped *ero-guro* aesthetics. The use of irony, satire, and seemingly meaningless images was a way of expressing political critique without suffering fines and publication bans. In particular, Umehara Hokumei used the threat of censorship to draw publicity and readers to his journals, always escaping serious fines or prison time himself. As in the West, the threat of censorship added compensatory excitement and energy to works that challenged the boundaries of permissible speech; however, Japanese modernists found this energy in politically seditious discourse in addition to the sexually obscene expression used by Anglo-American modernists such as James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence. Though *nansensu* aesthetics opposed government overreach, they did not support the same political objectives as the Proletarian Arts Movement; however, both leftists and *ero-guro* writers and publishers were united in opposing state censorship and cultural control.

By exploring these themes, I argue that the writers and artists of the movement demonstrated their belief that *ero-guro* discourses could produce positive change in society. They collectively created a discourse that turned pervasive anxiety into works designed for enjoyable consumption, uncovering a sense of value in modern mass culture. *Ero-guro* discourses show what specific problems troubled male cultural producers and how they used mass culture to address their anxiety in the Taishō and early Shōwa Periods.

Chapter 01

Detective Fiction and Modernology: Unraveling the Mysteries of the Modern City

By the mid-1920s, cultural critics characterized life in Japan as an endless series of new and disorienting trends, often imported from the West. “The big trends of today,” wrote Yamamoto Senji in 1925, “are radio and sports, dance, crossword puzzles, and double suicides - if you look at how they are written, nearly all use *katakana*. Old people who can’t read Western languages keep dictionaries of new words close at hand, if they want to enjoy the evening paper or see the cinema, in English or Japanese.”⁹⁵ *Katakana* are phonetic characters used in Japanese for words borrowed from foreign languages, and Yamamoto’s use of *rajio* (ラジオ), *supōtsu* (スポーツ), *dansu* (ダンス), and *kurosuwādo pazuru* (クロスワード・パズル) highlights the influx of foreign trends visually as well as rhetorically. The feeling that Japan had become a disorienting new world was not only the result of an ever increasing popular awareness of global culture but also the product of ever-increasing migration from the countryside into major urban centers such as Tokyo. At the same time, new trends offered a compensatory escape from anxieties over mass culture as well as from political struggles at home and abroad. Yamamoto’s own father was completely enthralled with

⁹⁵ Yamamoto Senji, “Shinjū to kurosowādo pazuru,” *Fujin Kōron*, September 1925, 33.

crossword puzzles, more than books or *shogi* (Japanese chess), and he suggested that the reason puzzles were so popular was that the mental effort in recalling English words like “yacht” distracted one from strikes in China and one’s own precarious economic position.⁹⁶

In a similar turn, well-known author of detective fiction Kozakai Fuboku commented on the vogue for crossword puzzles within detective stories: “crosswords and imitation crossword puzzles are so popular it’s as if the whole world has been covered in checkerboards.” Despite making the comparison between the growing popularity of crosswords and detectives, he does not offer any strong connection for the two trends, aside from a few Western detective stories that use crossword puzzles as plot points.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the impulse to catalog trends, work crossword puzzles, and write detective fiction all respond to the desire to impose a sense of logic and order onto the chaos of modern life. Crossword puzzles offered the pleasure of organizing unrelated words into a well-ordered grid through one’s mastery of a series of clues. Similarly, detective fiction of the 1910s and early 1920s aligned the reader with a detective who composed a series of seemingly unconnected clues into a coherent reconstruction of a crime. Edogawa Ranpo, arguably Japan’s most famous author of detective fiction, often drew the reader’s attention to the highly constructed nature of the genre’s clues and solutions. To give one example, his debut short story, “Ni-sen dōka” (“The Two-sen Copper Coin”, May 1923), followed the protagonist on a treasure hunt full of secret codes that turned out to be an elaborate practical joke played on him by his

⁹⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁷ Kozakai Fuboku, “Kurosowādo pazuru to tantei shōsetsu,” *Taishū Bungei*, January 1926, 70-71.

roommate. Furthermore, widespread efforts to describe and enumerate the artifacts and practices of modern urban life, most notably by Kon Wajirō, presented a scientific approach to creating order from the chaos of mass culture. Wajirō's *Modernology* organized and categorized patterns and trends in the urban experience, ranging from pedestrian traffic patterns to the frequency of different clothing styles, and created a rational order similar to what existed within detective fiction. And both *Modernology* and detective fiction sought to recover individual agency for the urban masses. I argue that both detective fiction and studies of material culture responded to anxiety and unease by rationalizing and organizing urban phenomena, giving a compensatory sense of mastery over the chaotic urban experience.

Theorizing the Detective

The detective story was an important lens for understanding the mysteries of the modern city. It built on earlier narratives of sensational crime and urban danger. Magazines like *Fūjin Kōron* (*The Women's Review*) frequently published accounts of crime as well as crime statistics. One article written by a professor of forensic medicine used French crime statistics to show the increase in indecent assault against adults and children in the summer, ending with a brief discussion of recent eugenic studies that claimed different races had different natural properties concerning crime.⁹⁸ Another summarized Cesare Lombroso's ideas that religion reduced crime by encouraging

⁹⁸ Mita Sadanori, "Shoka no hanzai," *Fūjin Kōron*, June 1920, 70-77.

virtuous behavior, and that criminals who adopted a new religion were likely to abandon their criminal behavior.⁹⁹ Stories about crime, jails, delinquency, and the like heightened readers' awareness of the problem of crime in modern society. Detective stories also imagined a world full of murder and theft, but allowed the reader to identify with a detective who could outwit the most cunning criminal and restore order and justice after a crime. This identification gave readers a feeling of mastery over the perceived dangers of the modern city.

German critic Walter Benjamin interpreted the modern detective story in two ways. First, the detective played with the representation of the city as dangerous and frightening; to the bourgeois reader, the city was a jungle filled with crime, social uprisings, and vice. However, this representation was phantasmagoric, hiding the social, political, and economic truths of capitalist modernity while providing an escape from its lifestyle filled with repetition and boredom. Secondly, the detective methodology - deep observations of the urban crowd and the traces of individuals - offered the pleasure of revealing the truth of the city streets, illuminating the traces of the past hidden from ordinary view. Benjamin's "theory of the trace" suggests that the ability to leave traces on one's surroundings is a bourgeois monopoly even as the increasing net of control over private life requires the bourgeois to conceal such traces from view.¹⁰⁰ More recently, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of place and space in detective narratives. French historian Dominique Kalifa has argued for the importance of crime fiction in structuring mental topographies of nineteenth century

⁹⁹ Katsumi Atsuyuki, "Hanzai no shinri to shūkyō," *Fujin Kōron*, December 1922, 132-138.

¹⁰⁰ Carlo Salzani, "The City as Crime Scene: Walter Benjamin and the Traces of the Detective," *New German Critique* 100 (2007): 165-189.

Paris. The public at large found confirmation of their anxieties surrounding the changing city as well as a way of localizing and containing danger.¹⁰¹ Detective fiction was a sensational and shocking form of entertainment, allowing readers to experience danger on the city streets at a safe distance, and at the same time, aficionados learned to read unfamiliar crowds and urban topographies.

Both producers and consumers of detective fiction in Japan in the Taishō and Early Shōwa tended to be educated, urban men. Scholars of Western detective fiction have observed that the emphasis on deductive reasoning and the techniques of the detective vary depending on the intended audience. For example, Heather Milton explains that in middle and upper class English sensational fiction of the nineteenth century, the police detective is appreciated when dealing with lower class criminals but his presence becomes problematic when the crime is in a middle or upper class domestic space. This class anxiety is resolved through the emergence of a gentleman detective, who additionally gives value to a seemingly unproductive man.¹⁰² By contrast, Michael Denning makes a critical class distinction in understanding detective fiction. He observes that in dime novels read by the American working class, detectives relied on disguise and physical strength, rather than rational deduction. For example, a “mechanic” detective, as he terms it, might go undercover in a dangerous, violent gang and later testify in court to their crimes. However, the reveal would not involve a

¹⁰¹ Dominique Kalifa, “Crime Scenes: Criminal Topography and Social Imaginary in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *French Historical Studies* 27 (2004): 175-194.

¹⁰² Heather Milton, “Sensation and Detection,” in *A Companion to Sensation Fiction*, ed. by Pamela K. Gilbert (Chichester: West Sussex, 2011), 519-520.

complicated series of deductions as in a typical Sherlock Holmes story.¹⁰³ The editors of *Shinseinen* (*New Youth*), the magazine that dominated the *tantei shōsetsu* (detective fiction) genre during its 1920-1938 heyday, consciously sought to cultivate a modern sensibility. Though initially many of the articles were didactic and aimed towards the self-improvement of its readers, by the late 1920s, the magazine shifted towards entertainment aimed at young urbanites. And like other literary magazines, *Shinseinen* included critiques and essays that understood detective fiction through the same debates that dominated literary fiction, such as whether authors should write art for art's sake or to promote a specific political viewpoint.¹⁰⁴ Japanese detective fiction responded to anxieties over changes in urban life by constructing an ordered way of understanding new experiences and by recovering the traces of individuals.

The New Sensations of Urban Life

Tokyo's denizens were experiencing the same psychological conditions of rapid speed and frequent shock as other city dwellers around the world. Between 1897 and 1920, the population of the city itself and outlying areas contained within Tokyo Prefecture grew from 1.3 to 3.3 million. Within the area of today's Yamanote rail line, the population increased 94 percent, and rose by 183 percent in the surrounding suburbs.¹⁰⁵ Japan as a whole was becoming increasingly urbanized during this time; between 1891

¹⁰³ Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1987), 122-148.

¹⁰⁴ Kyoko Omori, "Detecting Japanese Vernacular Modernism: 'Shinseinen' magazine and the development of the *tantei shōsetsu* genre" (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2003), 52-63.

¹⁰⁵ Theodore C Bestor, *Neighborhood Tokyo* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 45.

and 1920, the number of cities with between 50,000 and 100,000 residents increased from 12 to 31 and the number of cities with more than 100,000 increased from six to sixteen. The central government focused particular attention on Tokyo as the political capital and cultural representative of Japanese modernity. In 1888, the central government initiated the Tokyo Urban Area Improvement Project as the nation's first modern city planning effort, and in 1919 the City Planning Law and Urban Area Buildings Law applied centralized planning and development to cities across Japan. These laws set uniform standards of building height and street width for both urban and suburban areas and also incorporated Western ideas of public hygiene. The laws also allowed for new sources of development revenue, such as betterment levies imposed on property owners benefiting from projects and taxes on land value increases. Nevertheless, the impersonal imposition of top-down planning did not always account for the desires of local residents. As a result, there were frequent conflicts between the authority of local councils and central planning boards alongside disputes over financing.¹⁰⁶ While the central government attempted to impose a top-down order on Tokyo's extraordinary growth, local politicians, landowners, businessmen, and residents lobbied for recognition of local rights and interests. For average residents, their concerns and anxieties often felt ignored within the rapid pace of new development projects.

As locals clashed with government officials over financing and planning new development, individual residents looked for ways to carve out livable space in an

¹⁰⁶ Ishida Yoshifusa, "Local initiatives and the decentralization of planning power in Japan" in *Cities, Autonomy, and Decentralization in Japan*, edited by Carol Hein and Phillippe Pelletier, (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 28-33.

increasingly urbanized environment. One strategy proposed by the literary journal *Chūō Kōron* (*The Central Review*), and its sister magazine *Fujin Kōron* (*The Women's Review*), was the adoption of a “natural lifestyle” (*shizen seikatsu*). A natural lifestyle presented a set of guidelines for restoring a lost sense of community and social order that seemed lost in the explosion of urban development. Philosopher and critic Tanaka Ōdō's essay, “The Psychology and Logic of Admiring the Natural Lifestyle,” served as the lead article for the August 1917 natural lifestyle theme issue. He began by summarizing the history of Western philosophy on the relationship between man and nature, and characterized the current state of Japan thus: “we have abandoned the countryside, moved to the city, become industrial workers, each of us working at his or her factory, and so we cannot help but be absorbed by our separate jobs.” For Tanaka, the greatest problem facing the residents of Tokyo was the loss of community and connection to nature that accompanied the move to the city. His solution was a reconsideration of how urban life should be structured: “today, for adults, we need garden cities, and for children, education in industrial arts along with those cities.”¹⁰⁷

The term “garden cities” described planned residential towns in the suburbs of Tokyo with idyllic, modern, and Western connotations. The idea of the garden city came from the works of British urban planner Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) which called for the development of suburban towns surrounded by greenery or farmland; his Letchworth garden city north of London became a model for Japanese urban planners. Two of the earliest examples in Tokyo were Watanabe-chō in Nippori (1915) and Yamato-kyō in

¹⁰⁷ Tanaka Ōdō, “Shizen seikatsu ni taisuru dōkei no shinri, ronri,” *Chūō Kōron*, August 1917, 1-42.

Komagome (1921), built on land from former daimyo estates. The City Planning Law as well as the Housing Union Law of 1921 both facilitated the construction of new garden towns, while the literary community engaged in the discovery of the idyllic properties of the suburbs. To give one example, Kunikida Doppo described the peaceful harmony with nature to be found in Tokyo's Western suburbs in his 1898 novel, *Musashino*. His work combined Japanese poetic associations of the Musashi plain outside Tokyo with romantic descriptions found in western literature to transform Shibuya from an undeveloped outskirts to poetic bridge between city and country.¹⁰⁸ The discourses around garden cities, as well as Doppo's work, convey the strong impulse to counter the top-down redevelopment of Tokyo with individual efforts to find harmonious living spaces.

Other writers such as Satō Haruo appreciated the appeal of the garden city while noting that it was perhaps more idealistic than realistic. His 1919 story, "Beautiful Town," on one hand embraces the dream of the utopian garden city as a means of overcoming the tensions of Tokyo's rapid redevelopment, but at the same time acknowledges that such a dream could never become reality. Satō presents an account told to him by "Artist E," who became involved with a residential development project financed by the mysterious Theodore Brentano. Brentano was actually E's old friend, Kawasaki Teizo, now wealthy. He had become enamored with E's painting "Gloom in the City" and wanted his help in building a utopian community. There would be about a hundred houses of 1,500 to 1,800 square feet, filled with only useful and beautiful items. He

¹⁰⁸ Angela Yiu, "'Beautiful Town': the discovery of the suburbs and the vision of the garden city in late Meiji and Taishō literature" *Japan Forum* 18 (2006): 315-338.

would not rent his houses, but would choose as residents “(a) People most satisfied by the houses I built. (b) Couples who married of their own mutual choice and who both have stayed with their first marriage and have children. (c) People who have chosen as an occupation the work they like best. Therefore they’ve become most proficient in their work and have made a living from it. (d) No merchants, no public officials, no military . . .”¹⁰⁹ In other words, Brentano wanted the sort of educated, intellectual residents who had chosen professional careers and embraced modern values like preferring to choose one’s own spouse over a traditional arranged marriage - indeed, his residents would strongly resemble the readers of magazines like *The Central Review*, which published four other stories by Satō in 1919.¹¹⁰ E began to share Brentano’s utopian dream, and the two men worked alongside an eccentric, elderly architect who had studied in Paris during “the 1880s era of the Rokumeikan.”¹¹¹ They worked diligently every night; E made sketches of the community, the architect planned new houses with an appealing mixture of Japanese and Western elements, and Brentano even began constructing a scale model. But before construction could begin, Brentano confessed that he was not as wealthy as he had implied and had already exhausted his inheritance, and within a day had disappeared as suddenly as he had arrived. Yet neither E nor the architect could forget Brentano’s dream, and after E achieved success, he married the architect’s

¹⁰⁹ Satō Haruo, “Beautiful Town,” in *Beautiful Town: Stories and Essays*, trans. by Francis B. Tenny, (Honolulu, Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 36.

¹¹⁰ “Pale Ardor” (January 1919), “Two Fables” (April 1919), “A Tale of A Flute and A King” (September 1919), “The Seaside Watchtower” (October 1919).

¹¹¹ Sato, 43. The Rokumeikan, or Deer Cry Pavilion, was completed in 1883 as a place for Japanese elites to entertain foreign dignitaries. It became a cultural symbol of Meiji efforts at Westernization - Western visitors often saw the Rokumeikan as a poor imitation of Western culture, while it symbolized for Japanese critics a decline in moral values and the failure to the government at the to revise the unequal treaties between Japan and the Western powers.

granddaughter and lived with her in one of the houses they had designed.¹¹² Even if a location could be found and financing secured, it would certainly be difficult to sell all the houses while limiting the buyers to model occupants. Nevertheless, the idea of building a modern enclave for the right kind of educated, non-materialist, urbane, professionals was deeply appealing.

If not everyone could live in a newly constructed and aesthetically pleasing garden city, many writers and residents reinterpreted the dream of the garden city as a way of reframing their perspective on Tokyo life rather than an exercise in rebuilding urban space. For example, in a *Central Review* collection of statements on garden cities, one author wrote: “as much as the city has developed, natural scenery remains essential. If we cannot have fields, then surround the city with blue skies and fresh air and sunlight.” Another author made the importance of perspective even more explicit: “More than the power of the idea of a natural lifestyle are things that call to mind [natural] experiences; read travel logs; when you look at your neighbor’s wall, see the ocean and compose scenic poems; hear the vibrations of a train as the sound of a waterfall; on a thick board, build a miniature garden one meter long.”¹¹³ Similarly, female essayists in *The Women’s Review* described the best places to enjoy nature without leaving Tokyo. One woman listed what she considered the most pleasing and natural views within Tokyo. Another described various public parks and their best features - the wisteria trellis in Asakusa Park, the cherry blossoms at Ueno Park, and

¹¹² Sato 44-63.

¹¹³ “Tokai seikatsusha toriyore ebeki shizen seikatsu aji,” *Chūō Kōron*, August 1917, 131-142.

the shade trees at Shiba Park.¹¹⁴ For most Tokyo residents, the ideals of a natural lifestyle or a garden city were best realized by reframing their own perceptions of their city and finding ways to appreciate the public parks and scenic views that remained available to them.

Writers similarly commented on the shift from traditional shopping arcades to new department stores, which offered new pleasures even as they overwhelmed patrons. *The Women's Review* ran a series of essays in 1917 written by women living in Tokyo offering their impressions of the city. Ono Michiko, a lifelong resident of Tokyo's Kanda neighborhood, remarked on the way the famous department store Mitsukoshi was creating a new urban space. The Mitsukoshi company traced its origins to a kimono store established by Mitsui Takatoshi in 1673, but by the end of the Meiji period had expanded into a nationwide chain selling a vast array of goods. In 1904, the company made its famous "Department Store Declaration" to customers, "we will become like an American department store," and thus claimed the title of Japan's first department store.¹¹⁵ Mitsukoshi consciously worked to create a spectacular space through grandiose architecture and theatrical displays. The building was considered a masterpiece of Japanese architecture, with a huge stained-glass roof inspired by the Crystal Palace in London. In addition to the many departments stocked with retail goods of every type, the building included an elegant dining room and a rooftop formal

¹¹⁴ Tamura Toshiko, "Tōkyo no kōen," *Fujin Kōron*, February 1917, 21-23; Shigure, "Akanu to no nagame," *Fujin Kōron*, February 1917, 30-34.

¹¹⁵ "1904 nen 12 gatsu 20 nichi depātomento stoa sengen: kindai hyakkaten ubugoe," *Tokyo Shinbun*, December 19, 2007, <http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/hold/2008/anohi/CK2007121902073370.html>. Mitsukoshi ran multi-page color advertisements in the back of *Fujin Kōron* throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

tea garden.¹¹⁶ Ono noted that unlike at small shops, one could examine any item without it being shown by a clerk. She described female shoppers as fidgety, not because they were would-be shoplifters, but from the “rapture” of the store’s atmosphere. While most people preferred Mitsukoshi to other shopping spaces, Ono found people who were restless without an observable cause unsettling. For her, department stores seemed to evoke nostalgia for the shopping arcades of her youth.¹¹⁷ Mitsukoshi offered a new type of experience for women like Ono who lived in Tokyo or other major cities; though it offered new pleasurable experiences, it also created new anxieties through its overwhelming atmosphere.

Another woman, Ojima Kikuko, considered how Tokyo must seem to country folk entering the city for the first time. Her hypothetical newcomer would be immediately startled by the five-colored gas and electric advertising lights, then struck dumb by the rapid movements of trains, cars, and hurried pedestrians. She used words like “unease” and “dread” to characterize the experience of Tokyo’s public spaces. Nevertheless, after a period of shrinking in fear and enduring the jeers of Tokyo natives, Ojima’s newcomer would adapt to the city’s ways and change completely from the people of their hometown.¹¹⁸ While Ojima frames her essay around the experience of a new arrival from the country, her imagined newcomer also expressed her own sense of dislocation from her city. Ojima herself seemed startled by the visual assault of neon lights and the noisy confusion of an increasingly complicated system of trains,

¹¹⁶ Tomoko Tamari, “Rise of the Department Store and the Aestheticization of Everyday Life in Early 20th Century Japan,” *International Journal of Japanese Sociology* (2006): 99-118.

¹¹⁷ Ono Michiko, “Watashi no mita Tōkyo,” *Fujin Kōron*, February 1917, 24-30.

¹¹⁸ Ojima Kikuko, “Yūwakuteki miryōku ni tonda Tōkyo,” *Fujin Kōron*, February 1917, 35-40.

streetcars, and automobiles. From department stores to public transportation, Tokyo's urban spaces had fundamentally changed.

The problems of disruption and shock that accompanied urban growth and development were described in similar terms by Western writers. Ben Singer argues that urban modernity in the West had a neurological component, "a fundamentally different register of subjective experience, characterized by the physical and perceptual shocks of the modern urban environment."¹¹⁹ Indeed, the ways in which commentators described their experiences of urban change emphasized new sensations like being dazzled by the bright lights of Asakusa, stimulated in new department stores, or disoriented and under sensory assault. Ojima's essay, in particular, echoed Georg Simmel's observations in his oft-quoted 1903 essay, "The Metropolis and Mental Life":

"To the extent that the metropolis creates these psychological conditions - with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic and social life - it creates in the sensory foundations of mental life, and in the degree of awareness necessitated by our organization as creatures dependent on differences, a deep contrast with the slower, more habitual, more smoothly flowing rhythm of the sensory-mental phase of small town and rural existence."¹²⁰

Ojima was acutely aware of the sensory assault of Tokyo's streets, and her description was equally conscious of the sharp distinction between urban and rural life. Like Simmel, she remarked on the way city people appeared cold and uncongenial to rural folk accustomed to tightly knit social networks, and yet both believed that newcomers would soon adapt to the conditions of urban life. Tokyo's denizens were experiencing

¹¹⁹ Ben Singer, "Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 72.

¹²⁰ Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 13.

the same psychological conditions of high speed and frequent shock as other city dwellers around the world.

Transportation and Mental Shock

In both Tokyo and the West, the speed and noise of trains and streetcars frequently symbolized the physical dangers and psychological shocks of urban life. The first all-electric commuter train was built in Tokyo in 1889. After the Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905, the Japanese government nationalized the railways and increasingly invested in Tokyo's infrastructure. By the 1910s, many upper class residents had migrated to the suburbs and commuted to work and school on the new rail lines.¹²¹ Many passengers found the railways unsettling not only because of their rapid speed but also because of the new social space of the train cars. These anxieties followed lines of class and gender; in particular, many critics worried about upper class school girls sharing space with male workers. One 1922 account by Tachibana Ayao, "The Beauty on the Train," narrativized many of the most common male anxieties about the physical and social dangers inherent to train travel.¹²² First, a sunburned man from the country loses his ticket and is thrown off at the next station. His pleas to the conductor fall on deaf ears and the rest of the passengers ignore his plight, assuming that the man had lost his companion at an earlier station. The anecdote emphasized

¹²¹ Alicia Freedman, *Tokyo in Transit: Japanese Culture on the Rails and Road* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010), 27-28, 35.

¹²² Tachibana Ayao, "Densha no naka no bijin," *Fujin Kōron*, September 1922, 79-83. Tachibana does not name a specific line but based on the stations mentioned, his train journey seems to follow the path of the modern Marunouchi Subway line.

the confusing complexity of the Tokyo train system - particularly for outsiders but perhaps an indirect reference to the disorientation experienced by residents as well - and the seeming coldness of Tokyoites towards outsiders. After the man leaves the train, Tachibana turns his attention to a beautiful young woman of around twenty standing next to him. After describing her appearance and gaze, Tachibana reflects on a story he had read about traffickers buying fishermen's daughters in the South, and the tendency for hunters to prefer prey that returns their gaze.

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, there was a significant quantity of fiction and commentary surrounding the often-intrusive male gaze women were subjected to on trains, and the first women-only train car was established in 1912.¹²³ Although Tachibana goes no further than looking at the woman, she becomes the unwitting object of his attention and desire for the duration of the ride. Then, just as the train nears Ōtsuka, the train comes to a sudden stop, throwing the woman into the crowd of passengers. As other passengers and the conductor rushed to help her, she dazedly wrapped her left index finger in a handkerchief and asked them not to worry. In a similar fashion, contemporary Western newspaper depictions of the hazards of city traffic became a “dominant dystopic motif;” sensational newspapers dramatized tragic accidents and published graphic illustrations of the dangers of mechanized transportation in crowded cities.¹²⁴ Though the woman was not seriously injured, her experience in Tachibana's account solidifies the impression of trains as inherently dangerous spaces, and if the reader had any doubt as to the editor's impressions, the

¹²³ Freedman, 30, 45-46, 56.

¹²⁴ Singer, 79-83.

story ran as part of a special section entitled “Blood-curdling Stories.” Other authors shared Tachibana’s belief that trains represented physical and sexual danger; for example, Tayama Katai’s short story “The Girl Fetish” follows a thirty-six-year-old married office worker whose obsessive staring at schoolgirls on his commute resulted in a gruesome death by falling from the crowded train car onto the tracks below.¹²⁵ Trains exemplified a public space where physical dangers, such as injury in a rail accident, and social dangers, like a man gazing intrusively at a young woman, were equally threatening.

By the 1910s, it was clear to ordinary residents and popular writers alike that Tokyo had fundamentally changed; the question then became how to understand and adapt to the new environment. Many Western critics writing about modernity have argued that popular entertainment and mass culture offered a compensatory sensationalism, allowing urban residents to cope with the shocks of modern life by recreating intense shocks in a safely fictional environment.¹²⁶ In this context, detective stories offered the shock of gruesome corpses, terrifying criminals, and suspenseful environments alongside detectives who were uniquely capable of guiding readers through the twists and turns of the modern metropolis.

¹²⁵ See Freedman, Chapter 1, 27-67.

¹²⁶ Ben Singer describes the critical discourse surrounding a need for compensatory sensationalism to overcome the experience of shock in modern Western culture in his essay “Modernity, Hyperstimulus, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism,” 72-100.

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and the Birth of the Urban Detective

Edgar Allan Poe is widely credited with being the founder of detective fiction, and his 1841 story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” the first detective story. The narrator and his friend, Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, read about the murder of Madame L’Espanye and her daughter in a fourth-floor room. The murder appeared impossible because passers-by heard the women’s screams and rushed up the only staircase to find the door locked from the inside. Madame L’Espanye’s head had been nearly severed by a razor and her body thrown into the courtyard, while the daughter’s body had been shoved upside-down into a narrow chimney. Strangest of all, four thousand francs in gold had been left in the middle of the floor. The police and newspapers could not adequately explain who had committed the murder and why - the money was left in the room, and the women did not have any enemies with reason to commit such violence. After a careful examination of the room and the witnesses’ statements, Dupin applies his “peculiar analytic ability” to the problem, realizing that the culprit had to have escaped out a window that only appeared to have been nailed shut and that the culprit is not human, but an orangutan which had escaped from a sailor intending to sell it.¹²⁷

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” defined many conventions of the detective genre. The most important quality of a detective was a deep understanding of logical reasoning and modern life. Since the police usually serve as a foil to the detective, representing people who do not understand modernity and therefore cannot solve the mystery, the detective is usually not a formal member of the police force or if he is a

¹²⁷ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” in *The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe* (Philadelphia, PA: Courage Books, 1997), 655-684.

member, then he is one considered eccentric or unconventional by his peers. Like Dupin, the detective need not be a professional detective but often has a background fit for the study of the modern, such as a doctor, reporter, or an idle intellectual. Poe's device of having a companion narrate the story and Dupin's reasoning was widely imitated; two of the most famous examples are Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and John Watson and Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot and Captain Hastings. Dupin was also a pioneer of what Poe's narrator termed "ratiocination," or using reason to uncover the truth behind events. He alone noticed that one of the windows in the room was not actually locked, and that strange animal hairs were mixed with a torn-out hank of the victims' hair. The narrative of many detective stories turns on the single significant clue whose significance is only recognized by the detective. Finally, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was the first locked room mystery, where it is the setting of the crime that makes the crime appear impossible. In Poe's story, the room was located on the fourth floor and locked from the inside; furthermore, witnesses were racing up the stairs in response to the women's screams and the windows initially appeared locked from the inside. Naturally, the frequent invocation of conventions in detective fiction makes it tempting to dismiss the genre as derivative or clichéd; however, what is important, especially in early twentieth century detective fiction, is how an author chooses to follow or subvert readers' expectations.

Detective stories, or *tantei shōsetsu*, became popular in Japan in the 1880s through translations of popular works from the West and by the turn of the century many Japanese authors were utilizing the detective framework in their own works. By the

1910s and 1920s, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” was widely known by authors and audiences in Japan. Not only was it referenced in the press, but two of Japan’s most popular detective fiction authors at the time, Okamoto Kidō and Edogawa Ranpo, published variations on Poe’s basic framework.¹²⁸ Edogawa Ranpo is the pen name of Hirai Tarō (1894-1965). He chose the name by matching Japanese kanji to the sounds of Edgar Allan Poe, and the meaning might be taken as “disordered wandering along the Edo River.”¹²⁹ The story established many of the conventions of the detective genre, including the relationship between the detective story and modern urban spaces. Moreover, detective fiction as a genre showed how Western knowledge could be used for the good of the nation, while also suggesting a productive role for the growing numbers of underemployed college educated intellectuals. During the Meiji Era (1868-1912), government officials and public intellectuals promoted education as the path to national, as well as personal, advancement, but by the 1910s and 1920s, there were many high school and college educated men who were unable to obtain the well-compensated jobs they had been led to expect.¹³⁰ Thus, Poe’s detective story served as a literary model for Japanese writers to explore both the mysteries of the urban unconscious and the influence, good and bad, of Western knowledge.

In fact, detective fiction did not need to be set in a modern city to have its effect.

Okamoto Kidō was the author of a number of popular stories about the adventures of

¹²⁸ For one example, see “The Monkey in the Dormitory.” The story describes how a duke’s escaped pet monkey terrorized a female student on a school trip and explicitly compared the incident to Poe’s story. Sekiguchi Ryōzan, “Kishukusha no saru,” *Fujin Kōron*, September 1922, 83-86.

¹²⁹ Mark Silver, *Purloined Letters: Cultural Borrowing and Japanese Crime Literature, 1868-1937*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 134.

¹³⁰ Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 7-11.

Inspector Hanshichi, a nineteenth century Edo police detective; one story, “The Mystery of the Fire Bell,” closely followed the outline of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.”¹³¹ This framing allowed Okamoto to explore what had - and had not - changed during the course of Tokyo’s modernization. Hanshichi is brought into an Edo neighborhood block to find out who has been ringing the fire bell and committing other acts of petty mischief, such as terrifying a local geisha and stealing laundry from clotheslines. Like Poe’s Dupin, Hanshichi’s acute powers of observation, in this case, noticing the claw marks on the tower of the fire bell, lead him to the culprit, an escaped side-show monkey.¹³² What is interesting about Okamoto’s story is the contrast it offers to Poe’s urban dystopia. His escaped monkey commits pranks, not murders. A falsely accused apprentice becomes a hero at the end of the story by helping Hanshichi capture the monkey, and there are no hard feelings between him and the other residents. If Poe’s story is a vicarious enactment of urban danger, then Okamoto’s story comforts the reader by demonstrating that there is no danger at all; if urban mysteries existed in the Edo period, then why be afraid of Tokyo’s mysteries now - especially since Edo’s mysteries were never truly

¹³¹ Okamoto Kidō was the pen name of Okamoto Keiji. His father, Okamoto Keisuke, had been a low-ranking samurai serving as a translator in the days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and though a decline in his family’s fortunes left him without money for college, he gained a solid command of English from his father and began working as a journalist. By the 1910s and 1920s, he had become a successful playwright and fiction author. Though he preferred writing historical plays, his most popular works were his short stories about Inspector Hanshichi. He cited Sherlock Holmes as his main inspiration but believed setting his Inspector Hanshichi stories in Edo would keep them from feeling too derivative; eventually, like Arthur Conan Doyle, his fictional detective overshadowed his other more literary works. Serialized between 1917 and 1935, the stories were framed as the 1890s recollections of Hanshichi. Ian MacDonald, “Introduction,” in *The Casebook of Inspector Hanshichi: Detective Stories of Old Edo* by Okamoto Kidō and translated by Ian MacDonald, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), xiii-xxx.

¹³² Okamoto Kidō, “The Mystery of the Fire Bell,” translated by Ian MacDonald in *The Casebook of Inspector Hanshichi: Detective Stories of Old Edo*, 128-152.

dangerous to the innocent. Okamoto's Inspector Hanshichi showed readers that they need not fear urban modernity.

In contrast, the fiction of Edogawa Ranpo explored the darkest corners of urban life while also critiquing Western epistemology. His pen name alluded to his acknowledgement of the Western detective tradition as well as his interest in developing an understanding of the city of Tokyo. His career as a writer began when he submitted his story "Ni-sen dōka" ("The Two-sen Copper Coin", May 1923) to the magazine *Shinseinen* (*New Youth*), where it was received with much excitement by the editor, Morishita Uson, and detective fiction enthusiast and author Kozakai Fuboku. Both admired Ranpo's clever construction of a series of codes and puzzles within the narrative. At the same time, other contemporaries like Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke acknowledged Ranpo's skill in constructing analytic and scientific puzzles while also criticizing his increasing focus on the perverse and deviant aspects of human nature. This discourse led later Japanese critics to focus on the shift in Ranpo's work from "healthy" and "scientific" stories, focusing on logical reasoning and scientific knowledge like "The Two-sen Copper Coin," to "unhealthy" or "perverse" detective fiction during the mid-1920s, like Ranpo's story "Ningen isu" ("The Human Chair," October 1925). "The Human Chair" is presented as a confessional letter written to a woman by a master furniture maker who lives in a hollow section of a sofa in a hotel lobby and positions his body so that the people sitting on the sofa will be as comfortable as possible; this sofa was later purchased by her husband for her house and at the end of the letter, the furniture first confesses his love for her then claims the entire letter was intended as a

writing exercise.¹³³ Critics like Hirabayashi preferred Ranpo's work that followed the genre conventions of detective fiction to stories where he abandoned the detective structure altogether in favor of exploring perverse desires. Yet as Satoru Saito argues, emphasizing the dualism between healthy and deviant stories overlooks Ranpo's larger "epistemological project" that questions the rational methodology of the detective and indeed the possibility of holding "objective" knowledge about the criminal.¹³⁴ Many of Ranpo's early stories considered the problem of constructing knowledge about modern urban life, revealing the constructed nature of the internal logic of detective fiction while also demonstrating the essential modernity of Japanese cities, especially Tokyo.

Ranpo's 1925 story, "The D-saka Murder Incident," consciously follows much of Poe's framework, but like Okamoto's version, offers insight into Tokyo's experience of urban modernity in its differences. D-saka likely stood in for Dango-zaka, a hill in Tokyo's Sendagi district, where most residents lived and worked in a *nagaya*, a long building divided into many shops and residences with individual entrances.¹³⁵ Ranpo's unnamed narrator is introduced as an unemployed recent graduate who observes the urban crowd each day from the window of a coffee shop; his friend, Akechi Kogoro, is an eccentric intellectual, much like Poe's Auguste Dupin. The two stumble on the body of the neighborhood bookseller's wife, who had been strangled, and Akechi calls the police while the narrator guards the scene. The murder quickly takes on an air of impossibility, as the tight living conditions of the bookstore's building make it impossible

¹³³ Edogawa Ranpo, "Ningen isu," in *Ningen isu: Edogawa ranpo besuto serekushon* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2009), 5-32.

¹³⁴ Saito, 235-240; Silver, 136.

¹³⁵ Silver, 158-159.

for the murderer to have escaped without being noticed by one of the other residents - an ice cream seller would have seen if the murderer had escaped through the alley behind the bookstore, witnesses in neighboring stores and residences would have heard if he left through their buildings, and even the candy store owner who was playing a shakuhachi flute on the roof did not see anyone escaping from the bookstore.¹³⁶ Even though traditional architectural styles in Japan would seem to preclude a locked room in the style of Poe, Ranpo uses Tokyo's architecture to effectively construct a locked-room mystery without an actual locked room. And Ranpo himself clearly frames the D-saka murder as part of the tradition of Western locked room narratives. His narrator observes that "it is often said that with Japanese architecture, the sort of intricate crimes in foreign detective stories do not occur, but I don't think that's true at all, because there are cases like this one" and directly refers to Poe's story as well as Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Speckled Band."¹³⁷ Mark Silver argues that "these comparisons, by so conspicuously identifying Western precedents as the measuring standards for the genre, implicitly underline what the story in effect constructs as its own secondary and derivative status."¹³⁸ However, this misunderstands the point of Ranpo's references. "The Murders on the Rue Morgue" could only happen in a modern city where strangers live in close quarters and witnesses are both present and able to confirm the absence of any obvious suspect. By demonstrating that a qualitatively similar mystery is possible in Tokyo, Ranpo is asserting that Tokyo is as much a modern city as Paris, and that

¹³⁶ Edogawa Ranpo, "D-saka no satsujin jiken," in *D-saka no Satsujin Jiken*, (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1987), 29-44.

¹³⁷ Edogawa 47; translation from Silver, 160.

¹³⁸ Silver, 160.

Japanese detective fiction is no less modern than stories by Western authors. The paper shoji walls and wooden construction of Japanese-style buildings may have lacked the modern aura of Western-style buildings like the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Ginza or the Rokumeikan, but Ranpo's story shows that Japanese architecture is no less capable of hosting a modern locked-room mystery.

At the same time, Ranpo also uses "The D-Saka Murder Incident" to undercut the ratiocentric logic of detective stories. The narrator becomes convinced that Akechi is the murderer based on a series of seemingly logical deductions. He had known the bookstore owner's wife during elementary school, but had not mentioned it until after the murder. One eyewitness said the killer was wearing a black yukata while another said the killer was wearing a white yukata - Akechi often wore a yukata with wide black and white stripes that could appear as either color if seen through a screen at the back of the store. Only Akechi's fingerprints were found on the light switch in the room with the victim. Some of his prints should naturally be on the switch since he turned it on when he discovered the body with the narrator, but parts of the murderer's prints should still be visible beneath Akechi's prints. Akechi would know when the bookseller would be away from the store, and if he went to the neighboring soba shop, he could easily slip out the back of the soba shop and into the back of the bookseller's store. Since he often ate at the soba shop, nobody would pay any attention to him.¹³⁹ By the conventional logic of detective fiction, the narrator rightly assumed Akechi murdered the woman. However, Akechi offers plausible reasons for each point of evidence. He had

¹³⁹ Edogawa, 50-54.

not recognized the woman until after the murder, because he had not seen her since elementary school. When he turned on the lights after finding the body, he was extremely flustered and thought it was a different type of light switch, accounting for the many prints. Akechi also used Hugo Munsterberg's recent studies on the unreliability of eyewitness testimony to show that the two eyewitnesses were likely misremembering the color of the kimono.¹⁴⁰

But if all of the conventional evidence is flawed, then what is the detective left with? Akechi focused instead on the psychology of the case, and by interviewing local residents about the bookseller's wife, discovered that she was having a sadomasochistic affair with the soba shop's owner. As he explains his conclusions to the narrator, the two men look out the window and see the soba shop's owner confessing to the police.¹⁴¹ The rational logic of detective fiction implicates the wrong man, but asking the right questions about non-rational desire leads the murderer to confess. Ranpo had made similar critiques of the overdetermined logic of detective fiction in his first published story, "The Two-sen Copper Coin." The series of codes and deductions in search of a supposed treasure is an elaborate joke played by the protagonist's roommate. Similarly, in "A Cloud of Ashes" (*Haikagura*, 1926), a man shoots his friend and ultimately implicates himself by laying an elaborate series of clues he believes will conceal his guilt.¹⁴² Ranpo's twist ending gives his version of "The

¹⁴⁰ Edogawa, 58-64.

¹⁴¹ Edogawa, 65-66.

¹⁴² Edogawa Ranpo, "The Two-sen Copper Coin," trans. by Jeffrey Angles, in *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-1938*, ed. by William Jefferson Tyler, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 270-289; Edogawa Ranpo, "Haigakura," in *Hito de nashi no koi* (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1995), 138-164.

Murders in the Rue Morgue” a very different meaning from Poe’s story. He demonstrates that Tokyo is as capable of hosting a closed-room murder as Paris or London and that the city is home to educated intellectuals capable of rational deduction while simultaneously calling into question the exclusive ability of ratiocination to deduce the events of a crime outside the carefully constructed diagetic world of detective fiction. Arguably, Akechi Kogoro understands the modern urban mystery even better than Auguste Dupin, since he knows not only the techniques of deduction but also their limitations.

Then, in a subsequent story, Ranpo inverts the paradigm of the detective who understands and explains the mysteries of the modern city by allowing the murderer himself to narrate his deeds in “The Red Room” (“*Akai heya*,” 1925). By taking the viewpoint of a confessed murderer, Ranpo shows how understanding the logic of detective fiction - and along with it the underlying order of the city - can be used to indulge one’s desire for compensatory stimulation without being caught. The story is set in an exclusive club for Tokyo’s most decadent and depraved intellectuals. A new member, Mr. T, describes his unsatisfying life of “magnificent luxury” and “bloody games,” participating in spirit summonings and sex games, watching obscene pictures, visiting prisons and mental hospitals, and observing autopsies. Yet none of this satisfied his need for greater and greater stimulus (*shigeki*) - until he discovered the game of murder: “but already, those commonplace stimuli no longer make my heart race, and the magnificent games of this world only offer a slight feeling of dread, but now I have discovered the circumstances of one more amusement, and have become

completely absorbed in its pleasure . . . I am a murderer.”¹⁴³ Mr. T discovers in murder what seems to be a compensatory antidote to the crushing boredom of modern life. His technique is to use his superior knowledge of the city to indirectly and without inciting suspicion caused the deaths of less savvy denizens. Mr. T’s first murder occurred when a driver who had hit a pedestrian asked him for directions to the nearest surgery. He instructed him to go to the incompetent Dr. M’s office, where the victim died, instead of the equally close and highly regarded Dr. K. Morally, Mr. T considered his actions murder because he decided the fate of the old man hit by the car.¹⁴⁴ He also killed an old woman from the country by not yelling “danger!” as she was attempting to cross a set of busy train tracks. Gradually he became more bold, killing a stubborn blind masseur by warning him away from a hole made by subway construction while knowing that his stubborn nature would lead to him doing the opposite of what he was told. Mr. T even goaded a young boy into peeing on a live electrical wire and electrocuting himself. His greatest success was when he killed seventeen people in a train derailment on the Chūō Line. He scouted for the perfect location, then caused some rocks to roll onto the tracks from a nearby walking path just in front of a train.¹⁴⁵ The common thread of all these deaths - and Mr. T says that he never killed in the same way twice - is that Mr. T understands the dangers of the city better than anyone else. Furthermore, in each case he used the pretense of being a helpful and concerned citizen, or at least an innocent bystander, to avoid any personal risk to himself. Not only did he understand urban hazards like trains and electricity, but he also knew how to avoid any blame from the

¹⁴³ Edogawa Ranpo, “Akai heya,” in *D-saka no Satsujin Jiken*, (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1987), 70-71.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 74-75.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 77-81,87-89.

police or other witnesses. Thus, Mr. T's story was both terrifying and instructive; even as his confession may have frightened his audience it also showed them how to avoid being murdered by someone employing his methods. He was the perfect criminal counterpart to the detective, using his superior knowledge of the city to commit murder rather than uncover murderers.

Nevertheless, "The Red Room," like the "The D-Saka Murder Incident," was fundamentally a safe form of modern stimulus. After narrating his crimes, Mr. T pretends to shoot a young waitress, explaining that the gun he brought is only a toy, and has her shoot him. He collapses to the ground in a pool of blood. The waitress sobs, while the other club members plan how they will explain Mr. T's death to police. But then, Mr. T begins speaking again and explains that his story and "death" were nothing but an elaborate, exciting prank - the gun was a toy after all, and the blood was fake as well.¹⁴⁶ Just as Ranpo's fiction offered exciting thrills for the reader without genuine danger, Mr. T's fictional murder confession and trick gun was a source of entertaining stimulus for the jaded men of the Red Room.

Ranpo frequently used the narrative device of an elaborate prank revealed at the end to explore the terrors of modern life. Throughout "The Red Room," the reader encounters potentially frightening moments in the city, such as a downed electrical wire or a train accident. But since the end of the story emphasizes that these dangers were never actualized within the narrative, let alone outside it, the reader can enjoy a momentary thrill of danger while containing their anxieties surrounding that danger.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 91-96.

Ranpo returned to the device of the joke or prank when confronting and containing a common anxiety. To give another example, in “One person, two roles,” a man leaves his home and creates a new identity, then returns and becomes his wife’s “lover;” the narrator reveals at the end that the wife and the man’s friends knew the truth and were merely humoring him.¹⁴⁷ Thus, the fear that one’s wife is having an affair is reduced to a wife indulging an eccentric desire. Stories like “The Red Room” explained to readers how a murderer could use his superior knowledge of the city to kill with impunity while simultaneously containing fears of being killed in such a fashion.

Recovering Traces of Identity

Detective fiction also addressed anxieties surrounding the place of the individual within the urban masses. For example, Poe’s “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” a sequel to “The Murders on the Rue Morgue” again featuring Dupin and the unnamed narrator, focuses on identifying a body which was presumed to be that of Marie Roget who had disappeared four days before it was found in the Seine. Dupin uses newspaper articles to deduce whether the body could definitely be identified as Marie Roget, then traces the movements of Roget and her suitor, Jacques St. Eustace, in the time leading to her disappearance.¹⁴⁸ This story is one of the earliest examples of detective fiction that

¹⁴⁷ Edogawa Ranpo, “Hitori futayaku,” in *Hito de nashi no koi* (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1995), 30-41. This story also responds to men’s anxieties around women’s changing roles in society; in particular, the increasing importance of romantic love over traditionally arranged marriages and women’s newfound freedom and economic independence. See Chapter 2 for further discussion.

¹⁴⁸ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” in *Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humor: and Poems* (London: Henry Vizetelly, 1852), 122-174.

demonstrates the problem of identifying an individual within the anonymous urban masses. It also establishes the trope of the detective who solves crimes by following the traces left by individuals, an idea developed by Walter Benjamin in his writing on crime fiction. Later, as Tom Gunning argues, photography became the ultimate modern clue, since it directly supplied evidence about what it depicted and allowed immediate recognition of the object while being detached from the object in time and space. In criminology, a photograph could be the evidence of a crime or used in the identification of a criminal; both aspects appeared frequently in detective fiction.¹⁴⁹ Photography appeared to be the perfect modern tool to solve the problem of identifying both criminal and victim within the urban masses.

Ranpo played with photography as a means of identifying an individual and as a way of establishing guilt in his short story “The Actor with a Thousand Faces.” The narrator begins by recalling how he and his friend R, a newspaper reporter, always liked stories about the strange and mysterious; in a nod to the long history of such tales in Japan, he opens by summarizing a story from Ueda Akinari’s famous collection, *Ugetsu Monogatari (Tales of Moonlight and Rain, 1776)*. The narrator then recalls how he and R went to the theaters in Asakusa and saw a play starring an actor billed as ‘The Actor with a Thousand Faces.’ The play was a detective story, acted in the Western style, making it more appealing to the two friends than Japanese kabuki-style play. The lead actor appeared in roles ranging from women to old men and astonished the two by switching rapidly between disguises. The narrator even questioned whether it was a

¹⁴⁹ Tom Gunning, “Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema,” in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, ed. by Vanessa Schwartz and Leo Charney (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 20

number of actors creating the effect, until R pointed out that the actor always had the same timber of voice despite his uncanny ability to vary his facial features. The two walked back to R's room, where R showed the narrator an old article from his newspaper describing a series of gruesome corpse robberies at a Buddhist temple; only the heads of the corpses had been stolen and the culprit was never caught. He also handed the narrator a photograph showing an old woman, with the name of one victim of the grave robbing crime on the back. The two pieces of seemingly true evidence convinced the narrator that the skilled actor stole his "thousand faces" by robbing graves and making masks from corpses. Sometime later, the narrator asked R if he had used his reporting credentials to investigate the actor as they had discussed, but R could only laugh. R had concocted the entire story by using an old article from his newspaper about the corpse theft and a file photo of the actor disguised as an old woman.¹⁵⁰ "The Actor with a Thousand Faces" demonstrates the danger of uncritically accepting the photograph as proof, since the meaning of the photograph cannot fully be determined without context, which can be misleading. Indeed, the photograph proved nothing on its own and only suggested that the actor was the grave robbing criminal because of the false context R constructed. At the same time, the story is contained by the framework of the practical joke; as in "The Red Room," Ranpo lets readers enjoy the thrilling shock of the alleged grotesque crime while making clear that it never truly happened.

¹⁵⁰ Edogawa Ranpo, "Hyakumensō yakusha," in *Hito de nashi no koi* (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1995), 9-29.

Ranpo returned to the problem of proving an individual's identity in his novel, *Panorama-tō kidan* (*The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*, 1926). The protagonist, Hirosuke Hitomi, learns that an acquaintance from college, Genzaburō Komoda, had recently died. Although the two were not related, they bore a strong physical resemblance and many people at the time mistook them for twins. Hitomi is a struggling writer, and Komoda had been extremely wealthy, so he decides to fake his own suicide, exhume Komoda's body, and impersonate a miraculously still-living Komoda so that he can realize his dream of constructing an elaborate island park. He is mostly successful because Komoda's parents are dead, his younger sister lives in Tokyo, and he gives the rest of Komoda's family, friends, and employees enough money that they do not question his miraculous return. The only problem is Komoda's young, attractive wife, Chiyoko. Over the course of a year, Hitomi manages to build his island while avoiding Chiyoko as much as possible. But he became drunk at a party to celebrate the completion of his island, and she saw a part of his body that told her he was not Komoda. Though Hitomi had grown to love her, he decided he had to kill her. During the second half of the novel, he shows Chiyoko the many wonders of the island before strangling her during a fireworks display. He never leaves the island after her death, and his crime almost goes undetected, but for the investigator, Kogoro Kitami. He works for Countess Higashikōji, Komoda's younger sister who could not be bribed. Kitami tricks Hitomi into admitting his original identity by citing an early novel, "The Story of RA" where he had described what he would later build and revealing where he had hid Chiyoko's body. Hitomi is nonplussed, but admits that he could only continue running

the island for only a few months longer and chooses to commit suicide on his island. Komoda's money was nearly gone, after all.¹⁵¹

In order to fund the construction of Panorama Island, Hitomi uses his knowledge of how people interpret visual evidence to impersonate a wealthy and recently deceased college classmate, Komoda Genzaburō. First, Komoda's doctor "falls neatly into Hitomi's trap" because he believes that he had mistakenly declared Komoda dead and caused him to be buried alive and must justify his past actions.¹⁵² As a result, he does not look too closely, or at least not closely enough, to notice any differences between Komoda and Hitomi's bodies lest people think him incompetent. Hitomi bribed contractors, village residents, and family servants so that they would overlook any odd behavior and assume it was the result of his miraculous resurrection. The only person who realizes Hitomi's deception is Chiyoko, Komoda's wife, when a part of his body is revealed while he is drunk.¹⁵³ Hitomi's superior understanding of psychology and strong resemblance to Komoda allow his impersonation to succeed; at the same time, his success reveals the ease with which one's ability to visually recognize another can be deceived, especially when those who are fooled are invested in maintaining their own apparent ignorance.

¹⁵¹ Edogawa Ranpo, *Panorama-tō kidan* (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 2009). See also Edogawa Ranpo, *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*, trans. by Elaine Gerbert (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

¹⁵² Edogawa and Gerbert, *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island*, 36.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 48.

Kon Wajirō's *Modernology*: A New Technique for Studying Urban Life

Yet even beyond the concerns of identifying criminals and victims and proving guilt found in detective fiction, theorists of the modern recognized the unsettling anonymity of urban masses. Poe turned to this problem in “The Man of the Crowd,” a short story where the narrator watches passers-by from a cafe window and deduces their occupations and social class from their dress and manner. For example, junior clerks were “young gentlemen with tight coats, bright boots, well-oiled hair, and supercilious lips” while upper clerks or “steady old fellows” were recognizable by “their coats and pantaloons of black or brown, made to sit comfortably, with whit cravats and waistcoats, broad solid-looking shoes, and thick hose or gaiters.” The narrator observed peddlers, pickpockets, gamblers, and beggars before fixing his attention on an old man with an idiosyncratic expression, and followed him through the crowd until he entered a gin joint, where he deemed the man “the type and genius of great crime. He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd.*”¹⁵⁴ Poe’s narrator initially models how an observer can de-mystify the urban masses; through careful observation of clothing and behavior, it is possible to categorize each person by class and profession. But ultimately the narrator fixates on the unknowable criminal, a man who excites the narrator’s suspicions but is so mysterious his crime cannot be known. Later, Walter Benjamin appreciated Poe’s presentation of the London masses as ominous: “there was something menacing in the spectacle they presented.”¹⁵⁵ Moreover, mere participation

¹⁵⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Man of the Crowd,” in *Complete Stories of Edgar Allan Poe* ([Place of publication not identified]: e-artnow, 2003), eBook.

¹⁵⁵ Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (Boston: Mariner Books, 2019), 122.

in a crowd appeared to erase individuality. As Gustave Le Bon observed, an individual acting as part of a crowd gains a feeling of invincibility, even as “every sentiment and act is contagious, and contagious to such a degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest.”¹⁵⁶ He depicts crowds as highly impressionable and responsive only to the simplest appeals to emotion, erasing an individual’s normal rational behavior or moral values. Even if the urban crowds could be read by a skilled observer, the criminal hiding in plain sight, so mysterious that their very crimes remained obscure, served as a symbol of what remained unsettling and unknown about the urban masses.

In Japan, Kon Wajirō’s *Modernology* project sought to render the people of Tokyo legible in the wake of the Great Kanto Earthquake and the rebuilding that followed. At the time of the disaster, Kon was a professor of architecture at Waseda University in Tokyo who had previously studied the material culture of rural life. On September 1, 1923, the earthquake devastated Tokyo, Yokohama, and the surrounding Kanto plain. During the disaster, many of Tokyo’s wooden buildings caught fire; with water mains broken by the earthquake and high winds from a concurrent typhoon, firestorms broke out across the city and took over two days to extinguish. An estimated 156,000 people were killed or injured and the city faced an estimated 5.5 million yen in material losses.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1897), 9-10.

¹⁵⁷ Janet Hunter, “‘Extreme Confusion and Disorder’? The Japanese Economy in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73 (2014): 754-756.

The Great Kanto earthquake was one of the worst natural disasters of the early twentieth century, but as art historian Gennifer Wiesenfeld argues, it had a man-made component as well. Tokyo's high population density and flammable wood buildings contributed to the human tragedy of the earthquake.¹⁵⁸ Many Japanese critics at the time also recognized the human component of the disaster and, following a long tradition of interpreting earthquakes as a call to social reform, argued that modernity itself was a cultural crisis for Japan. Prominent banker and industrialist Shibusawa Eichi (1840-1931) wrote an editorial attributing the earthquake to political infighting and the lack of morality exemplified by the discourse surrounding Arishima Takeo's double suicide. Tenrikyō priest Okutani Fumitomo observed that the areas that suffered the most were commercial centers (Ginza) or entertainment districts (Nihonbashi, Kyōbashi, and Asakusa), which he claimed showed heaven's anger at excessive consumption and hedonism.¹⁵⁹ But these areas also embodied what people perceived as the most modern, and in some ways most Western, aspects of urban life; Ginza was home to department stores like Mitsukoshi, and Asakusa housed the greatest concentration of movie theaters in Japan. Other pundits attributed the earthquake to the liberated tendencies of new women, particularly the new "love marriages" that many new women advocated in place of traditional arranged marriages.¹⁶⁰ For many intellectuals, the earthquake seemed to symbolize all that had gone wrong with Japanese modern culture.

¹⁵⁸ Gennifer Wiesenfeld, *Imaging Disaster: Tokyo and the Visual Culture of Japan's Great Earthquake of 1923* (Berkeley, US: University of California Press, 2012), ix-xi.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 181-182.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 185.

Early in his career, Kon had worked under famed folklorist Yanagita Kunio as part of the White Reed Society, a team of researchers who traveled to remote rural villages to study local customs and living conditions. He sketched and commented not only on floor plans and architectural styles, but also on farming tools and small craft items. In the aftermath of the earthquake, Kon realized that he did not need to leave Tokyo to study the essential character of Japan - it would be revealed in the rebuilding of the city. In one introduction, he wrote that “observational surveys of the outdoor crowds” would reveal new conclusions that simply looking at home life would not show about Tokyo after the Great Earthquake.¹⁶¹ The city could not be understood only by examining homes and workplaces, but must include close study of the urban masses. There appeared to be no formal academic discipline engaged in studying the material culture of the present, so Kon invented one. He created a new word to describe his project by removing the character for old, “ko,” from archaeology, “kōkogaku,” with the present, “gen,” to form “kōgengaku” to suggest an “archaeology of the present day.” He rendered the word as “modernology” in English, but preferred the Esperanto equivalent, “modernologio.”¹⁶² In “What is Modernology?,” a statement of purpose for his new discipline, Kon argued that

“We must study, for example, different types of people in various circumstances, such as their speed and form while walking, their manner of repose and how they seat themselves, the mannerisms reflected in the minutest details of their bodies, the patterns adopted by pedestrians on the street, and the placement of street stalls in response to them, people promenading at parks, the different kinds of queues people form, scenes at rallies and meeting halls, the comings-and-goings of foremen and the

¹⁶¹ Kon Wajirō, “Ichirokunigo nen Tōkyō Ginza machi fūzoku kiroku,” *Fujin Kōron*, July 1925, 80.

¹⁶² Tom Gill, “Kon Wajirō, Modernologist,” *Japan Quarterly* (1996): 198-207; Izumi Kuroishi, “Selected Writings on Design And Modernology, 1924-47: Introduction,” *West 86th: A Journal of Design, Decorative Arts, and Material Culture* 22 (2015): 190-202.

activity of construction workers on the street, farmers in and off in the fields, how fishermen work and rest, crowds at festivals, nooks in cafes and theater corridors, and spectator seats at a sports arena.”¹⁶³

Kon’s modernology presented the material culture and everyday practice of Tokyo as more than simple post-earthquake reconstruction, but rather a type of expression constructed through the choices and behaviors of individuals.¹⁶⁴ Since he was not specific about what new knowledge would arise from modernology, nor was he concerned with statistical methodology, his work was criticized for a lack of rigor and analysis.¹⁶⁵ When his work was published in the 1920s, it offered a scholarly, even scientific, model for systematically observing life in the city. Like a detective solving crime through attention to small, easily overlooked clues, Kon’s careful studies attempted to solve the mysteries of urban life by observing and recording the smallest and most trivial details. And as a qualitative response to life in the modern city, Kon’s project was uniquely able to document and de-mystify urban experience through observation of the masses through the city.

For example, in Kon’s 1925 study of Ginza, he documents everything from the style and color of eyeglasses to the different poses of men’s arms. He categorizes passers-by observed over a set time period by gender, clothing style (Japanese or Western), and age (separating students and children), then arranges his data in charts with pictures illustrating clothing and accessory styles.¹⁶⁶ Kon’s work also

¹⁶³ Kon Wajirō, “What is Modernology?” translated by Ignacio Adriasola, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* (2016): 69.

¹⁶⁴ Miriam Silverberg, “Constructing the Japanese Ethnography of Modernity,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51 (1992): 37.

¹⁶⁵ Gill, 205.

¹⁶⁶ Kon Wajirō, “Ichirokunigo nen Tōkyō Ginza machi fūzoku kiroku,” *Fujin Kōron*, 78-106.

acknowledges the element of individual choice in determining what people wore.¹⁶⁷ One graph shows that between 3:45 and 4:15 p.m., he observed 224 men in kimono, of which ninety-five percent were in striped or patterned fabric.¹⁶⁸ Kon noted that Western clothing was difficult to reduce to a single color, but recorded that of 220 men in Western clothing observed between 5:45-6:15, 101 wore marled grey, 55 wore black, and 37 wore navy. The only pattern mentioned was stripes, worn by sixteen men.¹⁶⁹ Observations like these demonstrate Kon's recognition of individual choice in determining broader trends within urban culture. Moreover, Kon's Ginza study proposes a new way of systematically observing and categorizing the differences between individuals in an urban crowd. Although Kon did not have the clear purpose of catching criminals that detectives did, he shared their conviction that important knowledge was hidden in plain sight among the many passers-by.

¹⁶⁷ Silverberg, 39.

¹⁶⁸ Kon, 91.

¹⁶⁹ Kon, 88.

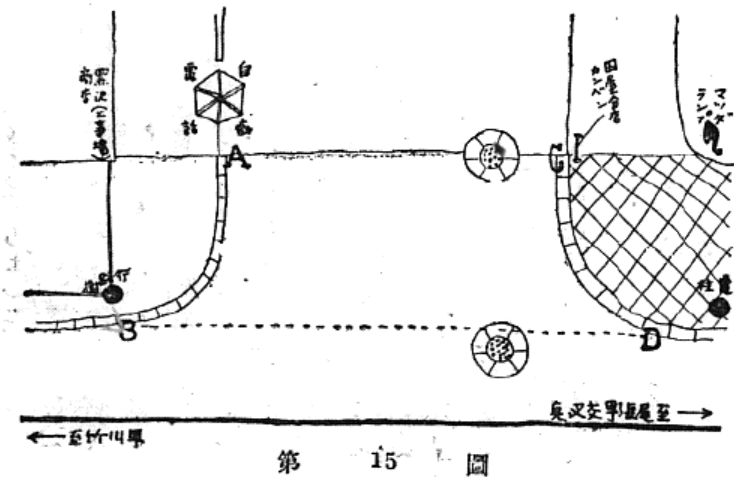


Figure 1: A street corner diagram and diagrams of traffic from "Ichirokunigo nen Tōkyō Ginza machi fūzoku kiroku," *Fujin Kōron*, July 1925, 78-128.

The second half of the Ginza study was written by Yoshida Kenkichi, a designer who worked at the avant-garde Tsukiji Theater and frequently collaborated with Kon in his Modernology studies. In one section, he documented traffic at a single street corner on a rainy evening. He includes both a sketch and a brief description of the

mise-en-scene, then a series of diagrams showing the layout of the intersection and a graphic representation of the “rhythm” of human traffic over different eight-minute intervals.¹⁷⁰ In the diagrams, the arrows pointing downwards represent vehicles: squares with arrows pointing downwards represent bicycles, circles with arrows pointing down represent rickshaws, and wide outlined arrows represent trucks. Circles represent pedestrians: white circles indicate men, black circles indicate women, and smaller circles indicate children. Yoshida’s diagrams use observations of traffic over a set period to record the types of traffic and organize it visually, attempting to demystify the urban crowd. In firsthand accounts as well as detective fiction, a frequent anxiety was the increase in human traffic alongside new forms of transportation like streetcars and rail lines. Thus, the simple act of recording the number and types of traffic heading in each direction for a specific interval at a specific intersection served to quantify, categorize, and explain urban crowds, as well as the confusion of busy intersections.

Kon discussed his similar objectives in studying the way people moved inside houses and walked the streets outside in “Study of an Earth Floor”: “I further wanted to study how people of various types, each with a different character and sentiment, walked and behaved in the street . . . when you seriously pay attention to aspects beyond architecture itself - the various traces that people unconsciously construct, the real ways in which people scatter various objects in the place they inhabit - you will consider the psychological conditions underlying people’s movements.”¹⁷¹ Rather than seeing modern life as represented by an indistinguishable crowd or urban masses, Kon

¹⁷⁰ Yoshida Kenkichi, “Ichirokunigo nen Tōkyō Ginza machi fūzoku kiroku,” *Fujin Kōron*, 107-128.

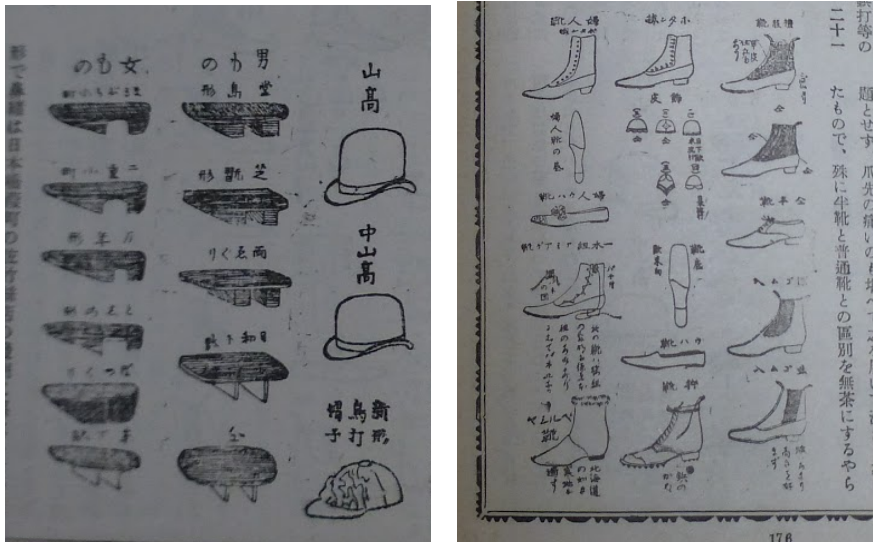
¹⁷¹ Kon Wajirō, “Selected Writings,” 206.

sought to use how people move and the traces left by their movements as a way of documenting individual choices and mental states. Along with Yoshida's study of the movements of passers-by, Kon's interest in the traces left behind by individuals was not unlike the practice of Walter Benjamin's detective, both ultimately concerned with understanding the psychological states of individuals in the urban crowd by observing their movements through the city. Kon hoped the study of modernology could demystify the seeming chaos of Ginza's streets along while also documenting the psychological states of the modern city dwellers.

Kon's methodology of observing and documenting modern material culture was soon imitated in other magazines geared towards intellectuals. Umehara Hokumei often included articles featuring similar explorations of modern culture in *Gurotesuku* (*Grotesque*, 1928-1930), a magazine for which he both edited and wrote articles. Using a similar strategy to Kon, Umehara chronicles changes in sartorial trends since the beginning of the Meiji period in "A History of Changes in Modern *Haikara*." *Haikara* is derived from the English phrase "high collar" and referred to the early adopters of Western fashion, who wore suits with comparatively high collars. Like Kon's illustrations of Ginza style, Umehara includes drawings of different shoe and hat types worn by stylish, high collar types. Yet he also repeatedly reminds the reader that the only constant is that trends are always changing; newspapers printed articles worrying about changes in women's clothing styles, for instance, in both the 1860s and in the 1920s.¹⁷² *Gurotesuku* on the whole tended to embrace the excesses of modern culture, but in this

¹⁷² Umehara Hokumei, "Kinsei haikara hensenshi," *Gurotesuku*, March 1929, 163-178.

case Umehara's message to the reader was one of consolation - there will always be new trends, so why worry?



02 Images of shoes from "Kinsei haikara hensenshi," *Gurotesuku*, March 1929, 175-176.



03 Images of European shoes from "Fukushoku no guro," *Hanzai Kagaku*, July 1931, 151-163; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku* 1-21, (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008).

Kon himself contributed articles to another popular *ero-guro* magazine, *Hanzai Kagaku* (*Criminal Science*). In one feature, “The *Guro* of Accessories,” Kon steps away from his observations of life in Japanese cities and turned his gaze towards the exotic fashions of Baroque and Rococo European dress. He begins by explaining his unease with calling the accessories of everyday life *guro* while acknowledging that such things do appear strange to modern readers. He next observes that Westerners found the grotesque first in Japan and the East, and now in Africa and the South - in contrast, he will look for the grotesque in the European past, focusing on curios and other luxury goods. He concludes that looking for *guro* in European culture is really no different from exhibiting animals or cultural artifacts on holidays or in zoos and museums.¹⁷³ His work acknowledges that *guro* often expanded to contain whatever the author wanted, from weirdly shaped shoes to chastity belts. It is significant that his transfer of the anthropological gaze from present-day non-Western countries to the European past did not challenge the dominant tendency of social science at the time to displace spatial differences between countries into temporal difference, or put another way, the belief that non-Western civilizations were at a “lower” stage of development; a more subversive author might have produced an anthropology of modern European material culture instead. In the end, he reached a similar conclusion to Umehara’s article. Readers need not worry or feel anxious about the endless parade of new trends, or even increasing interest in the erotic and the grotesque, because neither new trends nor

¹⁷³ Kon Wajirō, “Fukushoku no guro,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, July 1931, 151-163; *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*, (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008)..

decadent culture are very new at all. For Kon and Umehara, categorizing and quantifying urban crowds and new trends, then analyzing them alongside past taxonomies of mass culture, placed a well-ordered framework of understanding on modern material culture while reminding readers that feeling lost in new and constantly changing trends was not new at all.

Chapter 02

The Woman Problem, The Pure Film Movement, and the Sublime Ero of Cinema Actresses

In January 1922, author, screenwriter, and critic Tanizaki Junichirō ends his essay “A Woman’s Face” with the following observation: “when one sees the face of a young, beautiful Western woman in a moving picture in close-up, one often gets a sublime feeling. For some reason or another this does not work with Japanese actresses.”¹⁷⁴ His essay was part of a larger discourse in the pages of *Fūjin Kōron* (*The Women’s Review*) aimed at defining a consensus intellectual position on the so-called woman problem (*fūjin mondai*) which concerned the appropriate familial and social roles for educated urban women. Throughout “A Woman’s Face,” Tanizaki argues that women are most sublimely beautiful when mediated by memory, as when he recalls his mother’s face when he was a child or when one is in love with a pure and innocent woman. His turn towards cinema proposes another type of mediation, the cinematic representation of women. The fact that only Western actresses can appear

¹⁷⁴Tanizaki Junichirō, “A Woman’s Face,” translated in *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun’ichirō on Cinema and “Oriental” Aesthetics* by Thomas LaMarre (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 264. See also Tanizaki Junichirō, “Onna no kao,” *Fūjin Kōron*, January 1922, 32.

sublime points to the related problem of the global position of the Japanese film industry: writers and critics like Tanizaki saw Japanese films as categorically inferior and debated how to improve the representational techniques of Japanese films. Moreover, the success of many Western films in Japan was closely linked to the appeal of star actresses. Tanizaki's essays and short stories inhabit the intersection of discourses surrounding the role of women, the proper direction for the Japanese film industry, and the idolization of Western film stars. I argue that discourses around the sublime erotic appeal of cinema actresses in the 1910s and early 1920s expressed anxiety over shifting gender roles in Japan and the lack of international success for Japanese films while offering new ways for male viewers to manage this anxiety and still enjoy watching Western film actresses.

The Woman Problem and the Sublime Woman

Tanizaki likely never intended to enter the debate on the pages of *Fūjin Kōron* the “woman problem,” but as a popular author was pulled into the role of public intellectual. He was born in Tokyo in 1886, attended Tokyo First High School, and entered the literature department of Tokyo University until he was forced to drop out for financial reasons while successfully publishing his first few stories in 1910 and 1911. He achieved national fame in the late 1920s with the serialization of his novel *Chijin no ai* (*Naomi*) and his 1940s serialized novel, *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*), sealed his place in the Japanese literary canon. While his works prior to *Chijin no ai* are less

popular today, at the time his short fiction was very well regarded by the literary community. Those early stories and essays often addressed the new medium of film as well as the relationship between women and the cinema, and for a short time he even worked as a screenwriter. In 1920, he began working at the newly founded Taikatsu Studios alongside Thomas Kurihara, an actor and director who had billed himself as the “Japanese Charlie Chaplin” when attempting to popularize his films in the United States during the years prior.¹⁷⁵ Taikatsu, short for *Taishō Katsuei*, aimed to import the latest in Western films while producing films that showcased Japanese culture and daily life.¹⁷⁶ Although Taikatsu only lasted a few years due to economic troubles and Kurihara’s poor health, they produced a small number of films together, most notably *Amateur Club* (*Amachā Kurabu*, 1920) and *Lust of the White Serpent* (*Jasei no in*, 1921).¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, Tanizaki found working in cinema unsatisfying. He was frustrated by the need for collaboration, and critics have suggested that he lost interest in working in cinema because of the gap between the Taikatsu films and his artistic vision.¹⁷⁸

In January 1922, *The Women’s Review* ran a special on “The Sacred Woman” (*Nyonin Shinsei*), taking the subject from the title of Tanizaki’s novel by the same name that the magazine had serialized in 1917. Shimanaka Yūsaku, a former *Chūō Kōron* (*The Central Review*) editor, founded the magazine partially in an effort to capitalize on

¹⁷⁵ Joanne Bernardi, *Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 116-117, 146.

¹⁷⁶ Taking its name from *Taishō*, the name of the imperial era (July 30, 1912, to December 25, 1926), and *Katsuei*, a further shortening of *katsudō eiga* (moving picture).

¹⁷⁷ Bernardi, 118.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 162.

the interest in the controversial and short-lived feminist magazine *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*) and partly out of his own concern for women's issues. *Bluestocking* had helped generate both awareness and concern over the "new woman" (*atarashii onna*), who was politically active and associated with sexual scandals; she was dangerous from her newness as well as her femaleness.¹⁷⁹ *The Women's Review* also hoped to capitalize on the increasing number of educated female workers, who along with upper-level schoolgirls, were the magazine's core audience, though up to one-third of the readership was male. Most of the magazine's writers were men, and like similarly intellectual women's magazines such as *Josei* (*Woman*), it provided an important source of income for producers of fiction or literary criticism like Tanizaki.¹⁸⁰ Thus, "The Sacred Woman" special issue of *The Women's Review* was typical in that it included many short essays by male intellectuals and writers on the changing roles and expectations for women in society, often summarized as "the woman problem" (*fūjin mondai*), that acknowledge the importance of women's contributions to society though marriage and motherhood without appearing too radical.

The consensus *Fūjin Kōron* position on the women problem in "The Sacred Woman" centered on three points: first, women are naturally different from men and therefore have special qualities of their own; second, women's greatest strength is maternal love; and third, women have an important role in producing culture. As part of

¹⁷⁹ Japanese feminists adopted the phrase "new woman" from Western writers such as Henrik Ibsen and Ellen Key to denote an intellectual, feminist, and career-minded middle or upper class woman, set in contrast to the Meiji *ryōsai-kenbō* (good wife, wise mother) ideal. For more on Japanese new women, see Barbara Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁸⁰ Sarah Frederick, *Turning Pages: Reading and Writing Women's Magazines in Interwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 27-44.

this effort, Shimanaka commissioned ten essays from prominent male cultural producers, including Tanizaki, on the subject “Women’s Sublime Beauty.” The Japanese word for sublime, *sūkō* (崇高), entered the Japanese lexicon through translations of Western philosophy; however, most of the commentators use it to mean profoundly beautiful or noble.¹⁸¹ Shimanaka opened the issue with a brief statement calling the present moment an age of excellent women, particularly noteworthy for their natural shining light as mothers and limitless love.¹⁸² Many of the essays indirectly called for a renewed emphasis on motherhood, citing women’s maternal love and pure souls as the height of sublime feminine beauty. For example, novelist Funaki Shigenobu begins his essay “A Mother’s Heart” by describing the universal experience of a youth experiencing sublime love for a woman. But, romantic love inevitably collapses in selfishness and egotism. Then at last the woman has a baby and her strength is reborn like a woman who has found Christ. Thus, maternal love is more sublime than romantic love because it is purer and will not end.¹⁸³

Similarly, poet Tanaka Jun was deeply moved while watching his friends’ wife nurse her sick child who eventually died. Though he worried that writing about that experience might be excessively sentimental, it seemed to him the height of sublime beauty.¹⁸⁴ Other essayists focused on the participation of women in cultural pursuits,

¹⁸¹ It appears in Richard McGillivray, *A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms* (Shanghai : Christian Literature Society for China, 1913). See also *Bulletin of Faculty of Letters, Hōsei University, Issues 42-44* (Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Bungakubu, 1996), 28. Note that in the 1920s *sūkō* had not yet become associated with fascist appropriations of the sublime, e.g. the idea of offering one’s life in war as a sublime sacrifice. For more on the sublime in Japanese fascism, see Alan Tansmann, *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

¹⁸² Shimanaka Yūsaku, “Kōei kinari kagiri,” *Fūjin Kōron*, January 1922, 2.

¹⁸³ Funaki Shigenobu, “Haha no mune,” *Fūjin Kōron*, January 1922, 24.

¹⁸⁴ Tanaka Jun, “Bosei no naki ni,” *Fūjin Kōron*, January 1922, 30.

primarily as passive objects of male artistic vision. Ishikawa Toraji argues in his essay “Nudes” that a woman’s beauty only became sublime when painted by a (male) artist. For Ishikawa, known at the time as a landscape painter, beauty required a human artist: “beauty is what an artist paints. That sensitivity is a sense of beauty.” He claims that “woman” viewed as an object of nature was more than just a woman. For example, Ishikawa recounted when he painted a worldly model - and he also remarked that only a shameless woman would model nude for an artist - she gained sublime beauty through his artistic vision.¹⁸⁵ Centering the series of essays on the idea of sublime beauty allowed authors to combine well-worn praise of women’s maternal feeling with the idea that women’s beauty required mediation by the male gaze or the work of a male artist. Sublime beauty was a concept that effusively praised women on the surface but nevertheless limited women to roles as mothers and artists’ muses.

In stark contrast to the other writers, Satō Haruo’s essay “What is sublime beauty anyway?” questions the entire premise of the exercise.¹⁸⁶ Satō understands the sublime as something present in experiencing a natural wonder, or like seeing a god before your eyes. Though he envies men who see the sublime in women, he doesn’t think that a sublime experience can exist in a person, possibly excepting someone like Christ or

¹⁸⁵ Ishikawa Toraji, “Radai,” *Fūjin Kōron*, January 1922, 29.

¹⁸⁶ Satō had an interesting relationship with Tanizaki. He visited Tanizaki and his wife Chiyo at their house in Odawara in 1921 after the failure of his second marriage. At the time, Tanizaki was pursuing Chiyo’s younger sister Seiko who was starring in the film *Amateur Club* while he was working at Taikatsu studios. Satō fell in love with Chiyo; he and Tanizaki agreed that Tanizaki would divorce Chiyo so that Satō could marry her. But Tanizaki suddenly backed out of the arrangement, and the fallout between the two spread to the pages of literary magazines such as *Kaizo*. Satō spent the next four years drifting around Tokyo writing some of his most critically acclaimed work while making an unfortunate and short-lived marriage to a geisha. Eventually after a seven hour negotiation by Chiyo’s older brother, the two men were reconciled, Tanizaki agreed to divorce Chiyo, and Satō and Chiyo moved into a fashionable, European-style house in Tokyo. Elaine Gerbert, “Introduction,” *Beautiful Town: Stories and Essays* translated by Francis B. Tenny, (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996), 14-15.

Socrates.¹⁸⁷ Satō's commentary stands out from the other essays because it calls attention to how the context of *The Women's Review* affected what his fellow artists and writers produced. Praising motherhood as sublimely beautiful echoed recent feminist debates in *The Women's Review* and other major journals on protecting mothers. Everyone agreed motherhood was important and the different views of how to best support mothers brought issues of employment, economic independence, and suffrage into the public consciousness.¹⁸⁸ Satō ends his essay regretting that he has never found a woman "sublime" but envies those writers who have.¹⁸⁹ Portraying motherhood and physical beauty as the source of women's sublime qualities could be expected to appeal to the magazine's readership.

The Aesthetics of the Sublime

Satō's argument against a sublime person is grounded in Western philosophical understandings of the sublime. Edmund Burke wrote an influential eighteenth-century treatise that theorized the sublime as an aesthetic experience distinct from that of beauty. He calls beauty a "social quality" that incites affection between men and women. The sublime, on the other hand, operates in a manner akin to terror.¹⁹⁰ It is a quality that is inspired by things greater and more powerful than the observer, found in

¹⁸⁷ Satō Haruo, "Ittai sūkōbi to wa?," *Fūjin Kōron*, January 1922, 26.

¹⁸⁸ Hiroko Tomida, "The Controversy Over the Protection of Motherhood and its Effects Upon the Japanese Women's Movement," *European Journal of Japanese Studies* 3 (2004): 243-271.

¹⁸⁹ Satō, 26.

¹⁹⁰ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: J Dodsley, 1767), 58-67, Google ebook.

literary descriptions of Satan or a leviathan; in other words, “wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime, the concomitant of terror.”¹⁹¹ Immanuel Kant, building on Burke’s treatise, identifies three sublime modes: the terrifying, mixed with fear and dread, the noble, containing admiration, and magnificent, including beauty.¹⁹² Among early modern writers, the sublime was the feeling of being simultaneously overwhelmed and exalted. Indeed, as Robert Doran argues, it is no accident that the concept of the sublime became important in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when people wanted to preserve a feeling of transcendence in the face of secularization.¹⁹³

Similarly, Jean-Francois Lyotard argues that a contradictory feeling of both pleasure and pain, exaltation and depression, or joy and anxiety was reconceptualized as the sublime in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. The rise of the sublime marked the end of traditional poetics and the dominance of aesthetics over art, and was the moment when “romanticism - in other words, modernity - triumphed.”¹⁹⁴ Thus, the sublime is an encounter with an object that is so surpassingly beautiful, or magnificent, or impressive that it cannot be represented, thus producing a sense of pathos at the failure of representation. However, this pathos itself also becomes a new pleasure that enhances the original feeling. In the sublime aesthetic, one experiences an intense encounter with an object of beauty that is always separated by an uncrossable barrier of time or space. The intensity is so great that it demands an

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁹² Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 181.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁹⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” *Paragraph* 6 (1985): 4.

emotional response, while always asserting the singularity of the encounter - it might not last, and it might not happen again. In short, it is “the only mode of artistic sensibility to characterize the modern” because it simultaneously announces and laments the fact of its own indeterminate nature.¹⁹⁵ The type of self-referentiality encoded within the sublime is fundamentally modern, since aesthetic modernism knows all images to be representations via a medium.¹⁹⁶

While Satō seemed skeptical that people in general could be sublime, Tanizaki’s essay allowed for a conditional moment of sublime aesthetic experience in the cinema. Film itself is an ideal conduit for the sublime moment not only by virtue of its connection to modernity but also due to its formal properties. Film has the capacity to defamiliarize sensory inputs and to undermine automatic linkages through the way it translates still images into movement. Film is also the quintessentially modern medium of art. Walter Benjamin argues that the age of mechanical reproduction is an age in which the “aura” of a work of art withers because the work of art no longer has a unique existence. He observes that the aura of stage actors is tied to their physical presence; since the audience is replaced with the camera, the aura of the actor and that of the character he portrays is lost. Nevertheless, the work of the studios to promote stars attempts to compensate for the loss of aura: “the cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the ‘spell of the

¹⁹⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 92-105.

¹⁹⁶ As John Clark succinctly phrases it: “the basic condition of modernity is met in that all presentation is known via the medium to be a re-presentation.” *Modernities of Japanese Art* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2013), 60.

personality,' the phoney spell of the commodity."¹⁹⁷ In other words, in an age where all art has lost its aura, the cinematic presence of actors combined with the star system attempts to restore something like an aura, which is then marketed and sold to the masses.

Like Benjamin, Roland Barthes commented on the power of images of the star's face to move film audiences. In his essay "The Face of Garbo," he writes that "Garbo still belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy." As Barthes describes it, Garbo's face was "beautiful and ephemeral," more a mask representing a platonic ideal than an individual.¹⁹⁸ Because of this rare perfection of features, her face inspired the sense of awe that characterized the experience of the sublime. Similarly, as Melinda Szaloky argues in her reading of Greta Garbo's films, the star's *photogénie*, or sense of aesthetic transcendence, conveys both the sense of human lack as well as the promise that there remains something unattainable.¹⁹⁹ The way Garbo's films presented her appearance as an inhuman ideal that could only exist in film gave viewers a sense of the sublime. Nor was she the only silent film actress whose presence somehow exceeded the boundaries of the cinematic medium. Even before Garbo began her career, women like Mary Pickford and Francesca Bertini enjoyed a global popularity centered on their ability to create an aesthetic experience for audiences worldwide. However, even as audiences felt a strong connection to the stirring affect conveyed by these women's

¹⁹⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2019), 180-182.

¹⁹⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, ed. and trans. by Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 56.

¹⁹⁹ Melinda Szaloky, "'As You Desire Me': Reading the 'Divine Garbo' Through Movement, Silence, and the Sublime," *Film History: An International Journal* 18 (2006):199.

talents, they were always aware that the actress herself was not physically present. The actress's image served as an object of beauty whose presence only as an image always carried the reminder that the embodiment of that beauty was absent. The simultaneous presence and non-presence of silent film actresses served as a formal property that allowed actresses to convey the modern aesthetic of the sublime. Most importantly, through the evocation of the sublime actresses created a presence that extended beyond the screen.

The Pure Film Movement and the Dream of Exporting Japanese Film

Tanizaki's concern over the lack of female stars was not purely aesthetic, but also encompassed practical considerations for the Japanese cinema. Throughout the 1910s, the Japanese film industry was dominated by what Aaron Gerow terms "a dream of export."²⁰⁰ Both industry journals and popular magazines described an international silent cinema, devoting articles and promotional space to American and European productions. Upcoming films were listed nation-by-nation and articles emphasized the global appeal of popular stars. It was only natural that Japanese critics and industry professionals would aspire to develop a national cinema that could generate export income and critical acclaim; nor was the dream of international export unrealistic in light of the success actor-directors Sessue Hayakawa and Thomas Kurihara and cameraman Henry Kotani had already achieved in Hollywood. In fact, Gerow argues

²⁰⁰ Aaron Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 113

that the Pure Film Movement (*juneigageki undō*), a discourse that proposed numerous reforms for the production techniques of Japanese films, was driven by the desire for international export. Proponents believed that if Japanese silent films were made in an internationally intelligible visual language of the cinema, then they could achieve the same success as American or European films.²⁰¹ While it may be tempting to view the Pure Film Movement's interest in globalizing Japanese cinema as purely a move towards Westernization, the critics involved were more concerned with full Japanese participation in a global culture of silent film - and more broadly, the culture of global modernity. Written in the context of the Pure Film Movement, Tanizaki's observation that Japanese actresses lacked some crucial quality that foreign actresses possessed had broad implications for the domestic and international success of Japanese films.

There has been a tendency to blame technological inadequacy for the marginalization of early Japanese film; however, what most Pure Film Movement critics including Tanizaki usually pointed out were not technological apparatus but techniques of representation. Nevertheless, even within the Pure Film Movement there were calls to adopt Western film technologies and this reading of the movement was perpetuated by Japanese film historians.²⁰² The claims of technological inadequacy are unconvincing if technology is understood to be the apparatus itself.²⁰³ In addition to the number of Japanese expatriates working in Hollywood in the 1910s, most technological innovations were known or available in Japan as soon as they were available in the US.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 114-115.

²⁰² For a good example of this see Hiroshi Komatsu, "The Foundation of Modernism: Japanese Cinema in the Year 1927," *Film History: An International Journal* 17 (2005): 363-375.

²⁰³ See Gerow, 21-25. Gerow is highly critical of technological determinism in film studies

For example, the July 1919 issue of *Katsudō Gahō* (*The Motion Picture Graphic*) featured an article on the latest techniques in color moving pictures.²⁰⁴ The first color film, *The Gulf Between*, was made in 1917 to advertise the idea of color film but the technology was not used commercially until *The Toll of the Sea* in 1922.²⁰⁵ Even if Japanese film makers did not have access to the very latest technology, they were no worse off than American filmmakers working at small studios. However, if we understand technology to be a collection of representational techniques rather than a technological apparatus, then the Pure Film Movement's critique of the Japanese film industry was not concerned with the import of film technologies but with Japan's ability to participate intelligibly in the global silent cinema.²⁰⁶

Tanizaki's 1917 essay, "The Present and Future of Moving Pictures," was published in *Shinshōsetsu* (*The New Novel*) and explained the aesthetic changes he felt the Japanese film industry needed to make in order for Japanese films to be intelligible internationally.²⁰⁷ This essay argued for the superiority of imported Western films over native Japanese films, on the grounds that Western films better understood the aesthetic potential of the medium. Specifically, he noted that many Japanese films at the time simply filmed kabuki actors performing kabuki plays. For Tanizaki, the highly formalized and stylized nature of kabuki was contrary to the naturalism required in the

²⁰⁴ *Katsudō Gahō*, 8-11.

²⁰⁵ Herbert Kalmus, "Technicolor Adventures in Cinemaland," *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* (1938): 564-585.

²⁰⁶ A contemporary example of the difference between technology and representational technique is the selfie. The technology needed to take a picture of oneself and post it on the internet has existed for years but it is only recently that the representational practice has become widespread.

²⁰⁷ Tanizaki's biographers have suggested that he attended some of the early Edison and Lumière films imported into Japan between 1897 and 1904. See Bernardi, 143.

cinema: the heavy white makeup appeared ghastly, the *onnagata* - male kabuki actors specializing in female roles - were unconvincing, and the cinematography merely replicated traditional staging without making use of cinematic techniques like close-ups or panning shots. Furthermore, the reliance on *benshi*, actors who recited dialog and narration alongside silent films, prevented the Japanese film industry from producing films that could be exhibited abroad. Nevertheless, Tanizaki believed that with the introduction and mastery of naturalistic and new Western techniques, the Japanese cinema could produce screen stars with international popularity. Tanizaki's critiques echoed the basic tenets of the Pure Film Movement, though his essay's publication in a literary magazine gave his ideas greater exposure than essays only published in film magazines.²⁰⁸ It is important to note that these changes emphasized representational techniques over technological determinants and emphasized effective use of the medium alongside global intelligibility. In other words, Tanizaki and the Pure Film Movement did not want to imitate Western films but rather sought to master the most effective cinematic techniques. From 1917 onwards, the cinema, and cinematic aesthetics, would play a significant role in Tanizaki's short stories and critical essays.

Tanizaki continued to think through the new medium of film and the new experience of cinematic presence on the pages of *The New Novel*. In 1918, the magazine published his story "Jinmenso" ("The Tumor With a Human Face"), which contrasted the desirable, sublime beauty of a star actress with its grotesque counterpart, a man's face that appears as a curse. In the story, Yurie, an actress who

²⁰⁸ LaMarre, 65-79.

worked for the Globe Company in America but has now returned to Japan, investigates a film that she does not remember making. According to her fans, the film starred her as Ayame, a courtesan in love with an American sailor. Ayame is very beautiful, and because of her beauty, there is a poor, extremely ugly beggar who plays the flute outside her window in order to watch her. Because the beggar is in love with her, he helps her run away with the sailor, only asking for a night with her in return. Ayame refuses, and the beggar asks instead for a last look at her face. When she refuses that as well, because she is so revolted by his requests, the beggar throws himself off a cliff vowing revenge. While hiding in a trunk on the American sailor's ship, Ayame develops a strange tumor on her right knee that gradually develops into a version of the beggar's face, even more horrific than it had been in life. The tumor induces her to kill her lover and commit many acts of debauchery until she marries a marquis. But then, at a party, the tumor bites its way out of the bandages she had used to hide it and reveals itself to all her guests, and she in turn kills herself in despair.

Though many films at this time were shot scene-by-scene without actors knowing the whole script, and Yurie recalls having been filmed as a courtesan and in trunks and at parties, she still could not place when or where the film had been shot. So she went to her acquaintance H, who worked at her current studio and had detailed knowledge of the film industry, to see what he knew of the film. H had attempted to trace the origins of the film, but was only able to uncover the different leasing companies who had shown the film around Japan after Globe sold it. He also had heard numerous stories about technicians who had watched the film alone and become mentally and physically ill

after, and so his company leased the print out so that it would only be shown to larger audiences while remaining safely obscure. Both H and Yurie thought a technician working in Japan named Jefferson might have done the effect shots of the tumor, since he was well-known for his skill with superimpositions, but the scenes where the tumor moved and seemed to talk were beyond even his skill. And then neither could identify the name of the actor who played the beggar, even after writing to Globe. As far as anyone could tell, the actor had never existed.²⁰⁹

Tanizaki's story draws attention to the ontological problem posed by cinema: if moving pictures represent reality as it is, how does one explain the excess of presence - in the case of actresses, a sublime presence - that seems to exist only within the cinematic world? The film within "The Tumor with a Human Face" does not represent reality, in so far as Yurie does not remember shooting it, and yet it exists. There must be an actor who played the beggar, and yet no one can so much as remember his name. Even Yurie begins to question if she was not actually Ayame: "Who had it been then, this Japanese man who left for posterity his ugly image upon her knee lovely as white satin. The more these fantasies raged in her imagination, the more she had the impression that she was Ayame Daifu in actuality, cursed by a strange man."²¹⁰ It is significant that it is the screen presence of Yurie and the beggar that give the film its compelling effect. If Yurie-as-Ayame is the sublime object of desire, then the beggar is her grotesque counterpart. He too seems to have a presence that exceeds the confines of the film, but his presence is terrifying not only because of his role but because there

²⁰⁹ Junichiro Tanizaki, "Jinmenso," for English translation see LaMarre, 86-101.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

is no non-cinematic counterpart to explain his presence, a presence so strong that it causes sickness in people who watch the film alone. The beggar's dark version of Yurie's presence indicates the uncanny power of the new medium of cinema.

At the same time, both Yurie, the actress, and Ayame, her character in the film, demonstrate the lack of control women had over their images and bodies. Within the film's narrative, Ayame is a courtesan who must sell her body for money, and so her refusal to show her body to the beggar, much less spend the night with him, can be read as her regaining control over her body. However, the beggar's curse is to reappear as a tumor on her knee, in effect claiming Ayame's body against her will, and the tumor ultimately results in the death of the sailor and Ayame. Similarly, Yurie has lost control of her cinematic image, since a film of her has been made without her consent or agency and she cannot discover who made the film. Tanizaki's narration empathizes with Yurie and Ayame's desire for ownership, but Ayame's tragic end and Yurie's lack of resolution imply that such desires will never be fulfilled for women, or at least not women who appear on cinema screens.

In addition, Tanizaki's focus on the face as the source of cinematic presence shows how important close shots of actresses' faces were in producing a sense of the sublime. Indeed, Ayame's refusal to show her face to the beggar causes the curse, and the curse causes the beggar's face to return as a tumor. In his earlier essay, "The Present and Future of Moving Pictures," he wrote: "The human face, no matter how unsightly the face may be, is such that, when one stares intently at it, one feels that somehow, somewhere, it conceals a kind of sacred, exalted, eternal, beauty. When I

gaze on faces in 'enlargement' within moving pictures, I feel this quite profoundly."²¹¹

"The Tumor with a Human Face" shows both the importance of Yurie's sublimely beautiful face within the film, as an object of desire for the audience as well as the beggar, whose face becomes the source of grotesque horror. While Yurie's sublime presence is a source of pleasure for her fans, the beggar's grimace recalls the terrifying experience of the sublime theorized by Burke and Kant. Both examples demonstrate Tanizaki's belief that cinema creates intense emotional experiences when it engages with human faces.

Tanizaki's emphasis on the cinematic effect of an enlarged human face was shared by other writers in the Pure Film Movement. Kaeriyama Norimasa was a highly influential director and film theorist who, along with Tanizaki, provided much of the impetus and theoretical writing for the Pure Film Movement. In his essay "The Photoplay and Actors' Movements," he argued that in order to reform Japanese film, actors needed to research and understand makeup techniques - he is unspecific on what makeup techniques to use - and, more importantly, expressive movement [*hyōjoteki dōsa*]. "Expressive" here refers specifically to facial movement. Ideally, Kaeriyama thought that delicate, naturalistic facial gestures should be able to convey emotion without need for explanation from *benshi* or intertitles. Stage acting was simply too exaggerated to work effectively in cinematic close-ups.²¹² His ideas about acting style were strongly influenced by Naturalism as interpreted in the Western silent cinema. Naturalism sought to faithfully depict everyday reality; in particular, directors of

²¹¹ Ibid., 68.

²¹² Kaeriyama Norimasa, "Eigageki to haiyū dōsa," *Katsudō Gahō*, July 1919, 2-7.

stage acting such as William Bloch stressed the importance of understanding a character's motivation behind every line and gesture in order to create an overall unity to the performance. Eventually this led to a move towards creating idealized representations of emotions; directors wanted actors to express situationally appropriate affect rather than their own emotional interpretation.²¹³ However, I am not suggesting that Kaeriyama wanted to "Westernize" the Japanese cinema through Naturalism; rather, he saw Naturalistic acting theories as a tool that would allow Japanese directors and actors to communicate in a way that would be intelligible to domestic and foreign audiences. Indeed, Kaeriyama described expressive movement as the vocabulary in a global "Esperanto" of silent film.²¹⁴ Within his ideas of a universal cinematic language, the face and its effect on the audience remained paramount.

Interestingly, neither Tanizaki nor Kaeriyama gave much consideration to actresses' agency despite calling for a higher level of acting skill. Kaeriyama recounted an anecdote in his essay where D. W. Griffiths made a young Mae Marsh display the correct expression of "sudden terror" by firing a gun without her knowing beforehand.²¹⁵ Despite his continual encouragement for actors and actresses to develop emotive facial expression, the agency to determine what appears on film ultimately lies with the director. Similarly, in "The Tumor with a Human Face," Yurie did not even remember starring in the film. She may have provided the initial images of beauty, but whoever compiled the film ultimately had a greater role in its creation. Actresses were central to

²¹³ Johannes Riis, "Naturalistic and Classical Style in Early Sound Film Acting," *Cinema Journal* 43 (2004): 3-17.

²¹⁴ Kaeriyama Norimasa, 2-7.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

creating the sense of sublime beauty in the modern films that Tanizaki and Kaeriyama enjoyed, but neither man seemed to view actresses as more than necessary raw material for a director's artistic vision. By including sublime actresses, Japanese films could overcome their perceived inferiority to Western cinema while keeping actresses subject to male directors despite their new social role.

Sublime Actresses on Screen

Ordinary fans outside of literary and critical circles were also interested in sublimely beautiful actresses. While the experience of the sublime through an actress' facial expressions was strongest in moving pictures, still photographs provided a readily available means for fans to recollect or re-experience the sublime moment. Aficionados collected still photographs of their favorite stars clipped from magazines and received in response to their fan letters. Japanese film magazines of the 1910s and 1920s placed a high priority on photographs of stars. Every magazine, even the scholarly-titled *Katsudō Shashin Kenkyū (The Study of Movie)*, included a selection of photographs and film stills at the front of the issue, and some magazines like *Katsudō Kurabun (The Kinema Graphic)* eliminated articles entirely. While some of these photographs were film stills, photographs from film sets, or images of stars at leisure, studio photographs were always placed closest to the front and given the most emphasis. Although popular actors like Harold Lloyd and Douglas Fairbanks were often included among the studio photographs, a majority were of actresses. It is clear from both the number and

placement of photographs that these were a significant draw for readers. Moreover, magazines like *Kinema Record* also ran advertisements for firms selling bromide photographs of favorite stars. Perhaps most surprising is the relative scarcity of pictures of Japanese actresses in what was clearly an important source of fan attention for actresses and their studios. Despite the many articles describing the state of the Japanese film industry or calling for reforms, Japanese films were not widely advertised in film magazines prior to the 1920s, nor did magazines publish synopses of Japanese films.²¹⁶ Though few Japanese silent films from the 1910s and 1920s have survived, it is instructive to examine how promotional photographs evoked the sublime for fans.



Figure 4: Advertisement for bromide photographs of film stars (*Kinema Record*, January 1917)

²¹⁶ The film magazines in the Makino collection make virtually no mention of Japanese films or actresses prior to the 1920s. Aaron Gerow also notes that film magazines ran portraits of Western stars nearly exclusively, 159.



Figure 5: Dorothy Gish, (*Katsudō Gahō*, July 1919)

For example, this photo of Dorothy Gish from a 1919 issue of *Katsudō Gahō* (*The Motion Picture Graphic*) recalls her presence from recent films.²¹⁷ The composition emphasizes Gish's face by bathing it in light and leaves her shoulders and parts of her hair cloaked in shadow; this follows Kaeriyama and Tanizaki's assertions that the face is the most important element in producing a sense of the sublime. Her eyes are raised upwards and do not engage the viewer, suggesting a moment of deep emotion or spiritual feeling. Perhaps most importantly, there are no visual clues such as clothing or props that suggest a specific location or scenario. Thus, the viewer is free to project

²¹⁷ The caption mentions "Rojin" as Gish's latest film but since it is not a direct or close translation of any of her films from 1919 or prior I am unsure of the film's original English title.

whatever narrative he or she wishes onto the image. One might, for example, imagine that Gish is overcome with emotion while thinking about a distant lover, or recalling the idea of sublime motherhood, that Gish is filled with transcendent love for her child. The important point is that the image emphasizes her face and affect while being open-ended enough that the viewer can ascribe whatever narrative or sentiment he or she personally finds most sublime.



Figure 6: Jobyna Ralston, (*Chitose Graph*, June 1926)
 “A young lady of beauty, highest skill, and simplicity. A young lady who charmingly appears in Harold Lloyd comedies. Introducing Ms. Jobyna Ralston. See her again in *For Heaven’s Sake*”.
For Heaven’s Sake, a 1926 comedy starring Harold Lloyd, is localized here as “Lloyd, God of Fortune”



松竹蒲田の花形 英 百合子さん
 (「大地は微笑む」の扮装を凝らして)

シユークリムのやうな感じのそして明るい——百合つべいさん、蒲田では強がりて弱虫さいふ百合子女史、上映禁止で中京を騒がした問題の「大地は微笑む」の満智子の扮装。百合子さんはヤンチャさうに見えるけどなかなかしつかり者で家庭にあつては申し分のないお母さんださうです。

Figure 7: Hanabusa Yuriko, (*Chuō Kinema*, May 1925)

Shōchiku Kamata Star

(Dressed for “*The Earth Smiles*”)

“A feeling like that of a cream puff, or rather cheerfulness - Ms. Yuri-tsube; blustering in Kamata like a weakling, Ms. Yuriko; appearing as Michiko in “*The Earth Smiles*,” a sensational film prohibited from being screened from Tokyo to Kyoto. Though you can see her mischievousness, in a fairly steady man’s house, she would be a no-excuses mother.”

Though magazines began including more coverage of Japanese films in the mid-1920s, Western actresses were still represented as sublime in a way that was not permitted to Japanese actresses. Jobyna Ralston's photograph, published by *Chitose Graph* in 1926, and Hanabusa Yuriko's photograph from a 1925 issue of *Chuō Kinema* show the contrast in representation. Ralston's photographer uses a number of techniques to evoke the sublime. As with Gish's photo, it is a close-up of her face. The soft focus lends the photograph a dreamlike quality, and Ralston's gaze away from the viewer prevents a sense of direct engagement between her and her audience. She is aware she is watched, but her response is left undetermined. Hanabusa, on the other hand, is photographed crisply. The viewer sees her whole body in a way one might easily observe an attractive young woman in a location that could easily be a hotel lobby or expensive restaurant. While the setting and framing of Ralston's photograph suggest a vaguely remembered encounter or dreamlike state, Hanabusa's image is confined to everyday reality. Hanabusa's gaze away from the camera seems driven by shyness, or perhaps an interaction with someone other than the viewer; it lacks the indeterminacy and sense of unrealized potential necessary to evoke the sublime that Ralston's gaze offered. In terms of representational strategy, Japanese actresses like Hanabusa were confined to the realm of the ordinary and everyday.

The accompanying text also prevented Hanabusa's image from evoking the sublime. She is described as giving a "feeling like a creampuff" and despite her charmingly mischievous personality, the copywriter ends by suggesting what a "no-excuses" mother she would become in the house of the right man. In contrast,

Ralston is praised for her beauty and skill as well as her charm. Sublime actresses are invariably described with phrases suggesting innate beauty and talent as well as acting skill - certainly they are not compared to creampuffs! And the quick turn to wife and mother in Hanabusa's copy completely removes any sense of the mysterious or extraordinary in her image; at the same time, because the copy promises only potential motherhood in the right circumstances, she cannot even embody the sublime mother described by many of the essayists in *The Women's Review*. Though the sense of the exotic attached to Ralston as a foreign actress likely enhanced her perception as sublime, the framing of Hanabusa's image certainly prevents her from creating the same impression. Indeed, Ralston was impossibly distant even for men like Tanizaki working within the Japanese film industry, who could and did date Japanese actresses.

However, Hanabusa's lack of sublimity was not a result of a lack of skill or photogenicness on her part; rather, it may have been the product of the ongoing conflict of the modern woman that the sublime aesthetic was supposed to overcome. By the mid-1920s talk of the "woman problem" had been replaced by critical concern over the *moga*, short for *modan gaaru* ("a play on the English term modern girl"). The *moga* was highly eroticized, considered by some commentators to be *ero* personified but opposed to motherhood. Though sometimes she was portrayed as enslaved by consumer culture, she also produced new goods and habits. Her desire to work transgressed boundaries of class, gender, and culture, but her labor was trivialized and her public presence seen as disorderly. Moreover, the *moga* was not tied to a specific occupation or set of behaviors but was born out of the varied anxieties of journalists, novelists, and

cultural critics.²¹⁸ Hanabusa's photograph and the commentary below both work to distance her from problematic associations with being a *moga* or pursuing a morally questionable career like cafe waitress. Although Japanese women wore both Western and Japanese styles during the 1920s, Hanabusa's appearance in kimono distances her from perception as a *moga*, who was usually associated with Western clothing. And the text immediately moves from her appearance as an actress to the possibility that her next role will be as a wife and mother. Showing Hanabusa with the same eroticized gaze of Ralston or intense yet ambiguous spiritual expression of Gish may have risked representing her as dangerously erotic or overcome by mass culture. Western actresses offered a safely distant moment of sublime feeling, confined to cinemas and movie magazines, that was not permitted to Japanese actresses.

As the popularity of photographs of actresses suggests, the appeal of the sublime inspired strong feelings among Japanese fans as well as intellectuals like Tanizaki. However, it appeared to some critics that not all fans were able to maintain the correct distance from the female objects of their affections. In 1919, *Katsudo Gahō* (*The Motion Picture Graphic*) published an article by Tomi Kiyoka describing the types of fan letters received by Dorothy Gish's studio in Japan. Correspondence between fans and stars was an important way for fans to express their enthusiasm and for studios to further promote their stars. Tomi estimates that the cost of correspondence in Japan between movie fans and movie stars through the studios totaled 573,340 yen

²¹⁸ Miriam Silverberg, "The Cafe Waitress Serving Modern Japan" in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, edited by Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 208-224; Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 51-72; Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern: Japanese Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 76-79.

(approximately \$168,000 today), with 105,600 yen (\$31,000) spent by fans on things like stationery and postage and the rest spent by the studios on photography, clerks, and postage for responses.²¹⁹ This was a significant sum of money at the time; by comparison, popular magazines like *Katsudo Gahō* would have paid writers from 1-2 yen per page for original stories and articles.²²⁰ Most of these letters, as Tomi notes, were answered by clerks and autographs rarely came from the stars themselves, and it seems that Tomi was given access to a collection of old letters by Gish's studio.²²¹ Fan correspondence like what Tomi uncovered provided another site of engagement, in addition to films and magazines, with the star's sublime aura outside of the cinema.

While Tomi begins his article by declaring himself a member of the “Gish party” and a true enthusiast, his commentary about the different types of fan letters serves to delineate the boundary between correct and deviant fan sentiment. He viewed letters that acknowledged Gish's star aura while preserving an appropriate distance most favorably. Letters requesting photographs met with approval, especially when they thanked Gish for previous photos and autographs or described the care they took with their collection of photos. One fan described owning over two hundred Gish photos, while another kept Gish's photo in the very front of a birch album she had bought for photos of film stars.²²² Collecting photos and autographs allowed fans to possess an item that served as a connection to the star's aura but did not attempt to collapse the necessary distance between star and fan.

²¹⁹ Tomi Kiyoka, “*Wa ga doroshiisama e,*” *Katsudo Gahō*, July 1919, 38-43.

²²⁰ Ai Maeda, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity*, edited by James A. Fuji (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 174.

²²¹ Tomi, 38-43.

²²² Tomi, 38-43.

On the other hand, Tomi harshly criticizes fans who misapprehended the correct relationship between actress and enthusiast. He has no pity for a girl who wrote Gish asking for money for a coat, lumping her letter together with fortune-seekers attempting to scam Gish with offers of bogus oil stocks and land deeds. Yet the girl's understanding of Gish's screen presence is itself interesting; she writes "if you would bestow just that amount [the price of the coat] with your fortunate mercy, I would tell everyone. If you do that, I would make an advertisement. I know that the thing you want is advertisements."²²³ Her petition figures Gish as something like a religious icon, able to grant arbitrary favors in exchange for proper religious observance via the purchase of advertisements. This understanding of Gish's aura conflates the heightened aesthetic experience of her screen presence with a divine presence.

Tomi was similarly disdainful of fans who misread Gish's performance from the other extreme. Among the fan letters he read were numerous marriage proposals, one of which he reprinted "for its absurdity:"

Beloved Miss Gish,

I suppose you will be surprised on suddenly receiving this kind of letter since we have not yet met once. Still, facing you now, it is as if I am completely without discernment. That beautiful figure, charming expression, and skillful artistry - no matter what, they won't leave my head. Through films I understood your beautiful personality well. Someday without fail I will make you my ideal wife. I live in the country, but I watch you whenever I can. You are a single soul in the world for my sake. No one has the power to steal the place you occupy in my heart.

Next year, I hope to graduate from high school. Then, if I don't go to war, I think we can get married right away. I am sending you this ring so you can wear it for my sake. But I don't know if the size will suit you. If it does not suit you, please send it back, and then please favor me with a scrap of paper showing the correct size for your **wedding ring**. If you do that I will send a different one soon

²²³ *Ibid.*, 40.

Tomi has nothing but contempt for the sort of man who unilaterally decides on a wife and expects his proposal to be accepted, especially without ever meeting or corresponding first. But in the context of cinematic stardom, the aspiring fiancé's fault is in misinterpreting Gish's aura as surely as the girl requesting money for a coat. However, instead of ascribing too much power to the Gish effect, he wants to completely collapse the distance between fan and star by marrying her.²²⁴ Correct fan practices, like collecting photographs and sending effusive letters and gifts, did not threaten the distance between the star and her admirers, which was necessary to sustain the star's sublime aura while making it impossible for Japanese women to emulate her effect. Critics like Tomi believed fans who did not understand the importance of distance deserved criticism and mockery.

Tanizaki was similarly concerned with the appropriate relationship between fan and star. Similar to his consideration of the cinematic presence in "The Tumor with a Human Face," he examined the idea of obsessive love for a cinema star at its erotic and grotesque limits. In 1926, he published "Mr Aozuka's Story" ("Aokuza-shi no hanashi"), which took the form of a secret testament that Nakata, a film producer, wrote to Yurako, his actress wife, before he died. The testament described how one night, Nakata met a Mr. Aozuka at a bar. After a short time, Aozuka recognized Nakata as the director married to Yurako, and told him how much he has enjoyed Yurako's films. Yet this flattery soon began to disturb Nakata, since Aozuka focused on what particular parts of Yurako's

²²⁴ Tomi, 42-43. Interestingly, neither Tomi nor his letter writers express any concern that Gish would not have been able to read letters written in Japanese. This points again to the Japanese perception of the silent cinema as an international art form; though each country produced its own films, great films could and should be internationally popular.

body were revealed by each film; *A Midsummer Night's Love* revealed her navel through a wet swimsuit, and *Dream Dancer* showed the soles of her feet. Then he challenged Nakata's own knowledge of Yurako: "It is true you are the husband of Madame Yurako. But I desire to know which of us is better versed in the topography of Madame Yurako's body." Aozuka, through his long contemplation of Yurako's image on film as well as his surreptitiously obtained film stills, could draw every curve of Yurako's body from memory. Through the use of copious amounts of liquor, he brought Nakata back to his house and showed off his collection of over thirty nude rubber dolls made in Yurako's likeness. Even worse, Aozuka was not alone in his perversion but knew of other men who obsessively collected film stills of Yurako. Finally, Nakata ran out a window in horror when Aozuka began demonstrating the specific pleasures he enjoyed with the Yurako dolls. Nakata ended his testament by explaining to Yurako that his meeting with Aozuka is why he could no longer make films of her, because all he could think of is the ways in which that man possessed some part of her.²²⁵

Tanizaki uses the perversion of Aozuka, and the seemingly non-perverse Nakata as foils to complicate a simplistic understanding of the relationship between adoring fan and sublime star. The double confessional structure of the story maintains Yurako's innocence in Aozuki's perversion, as well as her status as an object of desire without agency. Though her knowledge of his desires could also mark her as actively voyeuristic, she only knows because of his confession to her husband, and her husband's testament to her. In fact, the confessional mode developed in Japanese literature as a way of

²²⁵Translated in LaMarre, 276-304.

explaining the inner thoughts of characters while avoiding a sense of eavesdropping or snooping. Thus, Yurako remains an innocent victim of Aozuki's perverse obsession as well as her husband's inability to resist exhibiting both her body and his knowledge of Aozuki.²²⁶

Aozuka's love for Yurako does not initially strike Nakata as perverse. Like a true fan, Aozuka has seen all of Yurako's films and considers them as good as anything coming out of the West. Initially, his behavior as a fan is similar to Tomi's correct fan letters; he unfailingly sees every one of Yurako's films and offers effusive praise to the star. These practices do not bridge the necessary distance between fan and star; thus, Aozuka's affections for Yurako only become perverse when he acts to destroy this distance. Even his least-perverse activity, the illicit purchase of his favorite frames from her films, resists distance by giving him ownership of Yurako's image. Collecting film frames was a common practice among cinema fans prior to the 1920s and is one major reason why few Japanese films from that period are extant.²²⁷ Film magazines even advertised special albums to store collected frames. Nevertheless, collecting photographs and frames, in so far as the still images served as lesser experiences of the sublimity possible in moving images, was unproblematic,

²²⁶ The double confessional structure of the story maintains Yurako's innocence in Aozuki's perversion, as well as her status as an object of desire without agency. Though her knowledge of his desires could also mark her as actively voyeuristic, she only knows because of his confession to her husband, and her husband's testament to her. In fact, the confessional mode developed in Japanese literature as a way of explaining the inner thoughts of characters while avoiding a sense of eavesdropping or snooping. Thus, Yurako remains an innocent victim of Aozuki's perverse obsession as well as her husband's inability to resist exhibiting both her body and his knowledge of Aozuki. On the confessional mode see Satōru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012) 23-30.

²²⁷ One of the reasons few Japanese films from before 1920 are extant is the common practice at the time of selling individual frames from old films. Gerow, 169.

but Aozuka the used the frames he acquired to construct physical models of Yurako from rubber bladders. Since he could not use her own body as a model, he used his collection of film stills to analyze her parts and find appropriate substitutes in brothels across Japan. This further diminished Yurako's sublime aura, because reduced to her parts, her image could no longer engage with Aozuka as a spectator. Thus, Aozuka not only resisted the visual distance between himself and Yurako, but also attempted to bridge the physical distance separating them. And there can be no sense of sublime without distance.

The advertisement is for a 'KINEMA ALBUM' and is divided into two main sections. The top section features a large diamond-shaped graphic with the characters '時' (Time) at the top, '産' (Production) on the left, and '物' (Object) at the bottom. Inside the diamond, the text reads '七百' (Seven Hundred) at the top, '第一集其一を發行せり' (First collection, first volume, now published) in the center, and '獣魂' (Beast Soul) and '繪葉書' (Postcard) below it. To the right of the diamond, vertical text says '引續き斯界の名寫眞' (Continued series of famous photographs of this world) and '繪葉書集發賣仕候間' (Postcard collection for sale). To the left, vertical text says '何卒陸續御注文被成' (Please continue to place orders) and '下度願上候' (We hope you will continue to order). Above the diamond, it says '毎回金名に漢怪一口其種々' (Every time, various types of strange things in gold names). Below the diamond, it says '他所に求められぬ名寫眞' (Famous photographs not found elsewhere). The bottom section is titled 'KINEMA ALBUM' and shows a diagram of the album's layout with 12 slots. Text to the right of the diagram describes the album's features, including its size (width 4.5 inches, height 3.5 inches) and price (gold 80, silver 40). The publisher's name '堂直正' (Tadachika Dojo) is at the bottom, along with the address '東京日本橋區石町一十一' (11, Ishimachi, Nishi-Shinjuku, Tokyo).

Figure 8: Advertisement for album to hold collected film frames (*Kinema Record*, January 1917)

On the other hand, there is a kernel of truth at the center of Aozuka's perverse delusions; namely, that as an actress Yurako's cinematic image is not her own. Much like Yurie, the actress in "The Tumor with a Human Face," Yurako has little agency in the production or control of her own image. Nakata considers her the crucial raw material with which he creates art - she is likened to the stone used to carve a seal. Art is created when Nakata films Yurako, and her role is to behave naturally before the camera: "with film actresses in general, it is a matter of looks and figure rather than craft."²²⁸ Hence part of the conflict between Nakata and Aozuka is over who really "owns" Yurako's body, Nakata as husband or director, or Aozuka as the fan who has fully apprehended her cinematic presence. Thus, Aozuka is not entirely wrong when he tells Nakata: "your wife has substance, and the one on film has a substance of its own."²²⁹ While Nakata might know the Yurako who exists as a woman, Aozuka argues for the existence of an ontologically distinct cinematic Yurako. Fans like him do not see a representation of the actress as a woman, but rather experience a presence that transcends the representation. His perversion naturally arises from his otherwise correct understanding of the power of the cinematic presence; since Aozuka has fallen in love with screen-Yurako, it follows that he should want to have sexual relations with her. Aozuka illuminates the ability of film to create a deep encounter between screen star and viewer, while also demonstrating the perversity of transforming a cinematic encounter into a physical relationship. At the same time, the conflict between Nakata

²²⁸ Tanizaki, trans. in LaMarre, 277.

²²⁹ LaMarre, 288-289.

and Aozuka shows that the one person who can never have control of Yurako's body is Yurako.

Tanizaki's work during the 1920s repeatedly turned to the problem of wanting, but never fully having, control over modern women. In *Chijin no Ai (Naomi)*, 1924), the narrator falls in love with Naomi, a woman thirteen years younger than him who resembles Mary Pickford. He recalls their early years together with great happiness, describing how he shaped Naomi into his ideal woman, paying for lessons in English, music, and dancing, buying her clothing, and even bathing her every night. He titled his diary from this time "Naomi grows up."²³⁰ The problem is that as Naomi grows older, she insists more and more on having her own way, including having affairs with other men, and the narrator throws her out of the house after he can no longer explain the situation away. However, he quickly regrets his decision and welcomes her back when she returns in a pale blue French crepe dress, looking like a Western actress.²³¹ He decides to love Naomi despite her fickleness, her selfishness, and her affairs with male friends, discovering a new eroticism in submitting to her whims. If new women cannot be possessed, separated by a seemingly impossible distance, then Tanizaki's answer is to find pleasure in that very fact. And if Western actresses were unattainable, then one could create a substitute like Aozuka or Naomi's husband did. The reason why Japanese actresses were not sublime is that screenwriters like Tanizaki could and did have affairs with actresses, and so lacked the distance necessary to sustain the fantasy required to evoke the sublime in cinema.

²³⁰ Junichiro Tanizaki, *Naomi*, trans. by Anthony C. Chambers (New York: Vintage International, 1985), 33.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 208-209.

The End of the Pure Film Movement

Despite the widespread popularity of the sublime *ero* of Western film actresses, external events forced the Japanese cinema to find a different way of appealing to audiences. The majority of production studios and the highest concentrations of theaters were located in and around Tokyo. As a result, the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, estimated to have killed or injured over 156,000 people and to have caused material losses of over 5.5 billion yen, was devastating to the industry. Japan's highly integrated market economy alongside significant government intervention in the days after the disaster are credited with minimizing the effect of the catastrophe in the long term. At the same time, many industries, including the theaters and production companies of the film industry, were forced to alter their business practices.²³²

Prior to the earthquake, Japanese theater owners viewed locally produced films as a supplement to Western titles. In 1917, Japanese-produced films made up only 26% of the works shown in theaters. While some theaters at the time were also owned by film producers as in the United States, the majority were special contract theaters. Managers and owners of special contract theaters had broad freedom to select whatever films they thought would play well with audiences, in contrast with directly operated theaters that showed whatever the production company sent and had to share their profits with the production company. In part, the Pure Film Movement looked to

²³² Janet Hunter, "‘Extreme Confusion and Disorder’? The Japanese Economy in the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923" in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 73 (2014): 754-756.

shift control away from exhibitors and to producers and directors, who would create films that functioned independently from exhibition using purely cinematic techniques. Though the shift in industry control from exhibitors to producers had already begun by 1923, the earthquake's destruction of nearly all the studios and theaters in Tokyo accelerated the shift. Then, Universal and other foreign distribution companies entered the Japanese market, forcing locally owned theaters to rely less on imported products.²³³ The Japanese industry needed a new cinematic appeal to draw patrons to locally produced films. Rather than sublime actresses, Japanese filmmakers turned to the charismatic male leads of kabuki theater, who starred in historical films full of sword fights and gangsters.

The obvious source of new screenplays and acting talent was the theater world. Some film historians suggest that both the theater and film industries were controlled by yakuza in a pre-modern holdover from the nineteenth century, though it is hard to say how far this connection extended beyond fiscal investment.²³⁴ Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation, the dominant theatre corporation in Japan which was unrivaled in scale until the founding of Tōhō Theatrical Corporation in 1932, formed a cinema division in 1920 that aimed to use the best techniques of Western filmmaking. Shōchiku owned a broad and deep network of theaters spanning Japan and ranging from first tier theaters that featured pedigreed stars to suburban and rural troupes that traveled from

²³³ Gerow, 163-172.

²³⁴ Isolde Standish citing Japanese film historian Satō Tadao, *A New History of Japanese Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 35-36. I have heard claims of virtually every industry in Japan having yakuza ties. Outside of areas where yakuza exercise direct control such as black market loans, illegal goods, *pachinko* gambling parlors, and sex work / *mizu shobai*, I am always somewhat skeptical of the significance of the yakuza connection beyond indirect financial support.

engagement to engagement. The cinema division aimed to put into practice many of the Pure Film Movement's reforms, such as utilizing Western forms of shooting and editing and eliminating *onnagata*, male kabuki actors who specialized in playing women, in favor of actresses. As early as 1912, Shōchiku had supported a school for *shinpa* and *shingeki* actresses at the *Teikoku Gekijyō* (National Theater)²³⁵ Thereafter, Shōchiku's foray into cinema enjoyed many advantages over Taikatsu, the studio that employed Tanizaki as a writer during its brief run. Shōchiku had financial resources and a deep pool of acting talent, some of whom would become cinema stars.

However, Shōchiku's acting talent was predominantly male. Kikuchi Kan was a playwright who wrote *shingeki* plays for Shōchiku troupes and, like Tanizaki, later turned his interests to cinema. After establishing his reputation, he founded the magazine *Eiga Jidai* (*Film Age*) in 1926 in order to promote the relationship between film and literature.

²³⁶ In a 1921 essay, Kikuchi expressed similar ideas to Tanizaki in that his initial reaction to the poor performance of Japanese actresses was to claim that "Japanese are not a moving-picture-type race." Nevertheless, he greatly admired Inoue Masao's work in recent films but found Inoue's performance ruined by the poor quality of Japanese actresses.²³⁷ Thus, he maintained that it was not a lack of beauty that kept Japanese actresses from achieving the sublimely beautiful facial expressions of Western actresses, but rather that Japanese actresses were unfamiliar with the realistic acting techniques needed for the cinema. He thought that in ten or twelve years

²³⁵ James R. Brandon, *Kabuki's Forgotten War: 1931-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 21-26.

²³⁶ Komatsu, 363-375.

²³⁷ Inoue later starred in Kinugasa Teinosuke's 1926 masterpiece, *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta Ippai*).

Japanese actresses would be able to compete against Western women appearing in films.²³⁸ After all, it was only recently that women were permitted on the Japanese stage, and at the publication of Kikuchi's essay the sole acting school for women had only existed nine years. Naturally it was difficult to find promising screen actresses among the shallow and undeveloped pool of theater actresses.

²³⁸ Kikuchi Kan, "Shorai no nihon eiga," originally in *Engei Gahō (Entertainment Illustrated)*, 1921, reprinted in *Showa modanizumu wo keninn shita otoko* (Tokyo: Seiryu Publishing Co., 2009), 191-193.



中京の皆さまへ
暑中御伺ひ申上ます

▽今年の夏は格別お暑いことですが、皆さまにはお變り
はございませんか。私の映畫が中京に於て特別に御ひいき
にして頂いて居りますことは、兼て拜承いたしましたして深く
感謝して居ります。何卒末永く御鞭撻御指導下さいますや
うに。

▽最近等持院の方をやめて新たに阪東妻三郎プロダクシ
ョンを設立いたしました。私の主演した「影法師」の續篇
「續影法師」は最近に港座の方へ出るこゝになつて居りま
すから上映の日は御評判下さいませやうに。

▽マキノから名古屋へは時々ロケーションに参りますが
運悪く私はいつも連中に加はることが出来ませんでした。
五月に参りました時には格別の御聲援を下さりまして、御
厚志の有難さ、深く感銘いたして居ります。この夏中か或
は秋の初め頃には又一度ロケーションを兼ねて御挨拶に出
やうと存じて居ります。その節は又一層の應援を願ひます
▽夏の楽しみは兎角マキノの時代活劇を見物するか、そ
れさも入浴に限るやうに存じます。入浴にはミツワ石鹼の
使ひ心地がよろしいもので……（ウソつけー）では皆さま
お健かに夏を過して下さい。

（阪東妻三郎プロダクションにて——阪東妻三郎）

Figure 9: A 1925 advertisement for Bandō Tsumasaburo's production company, in the form of a chatty letter detailing Bandō's summer travels and work engagements. (*Chūkyō Kinema*, August 1925)

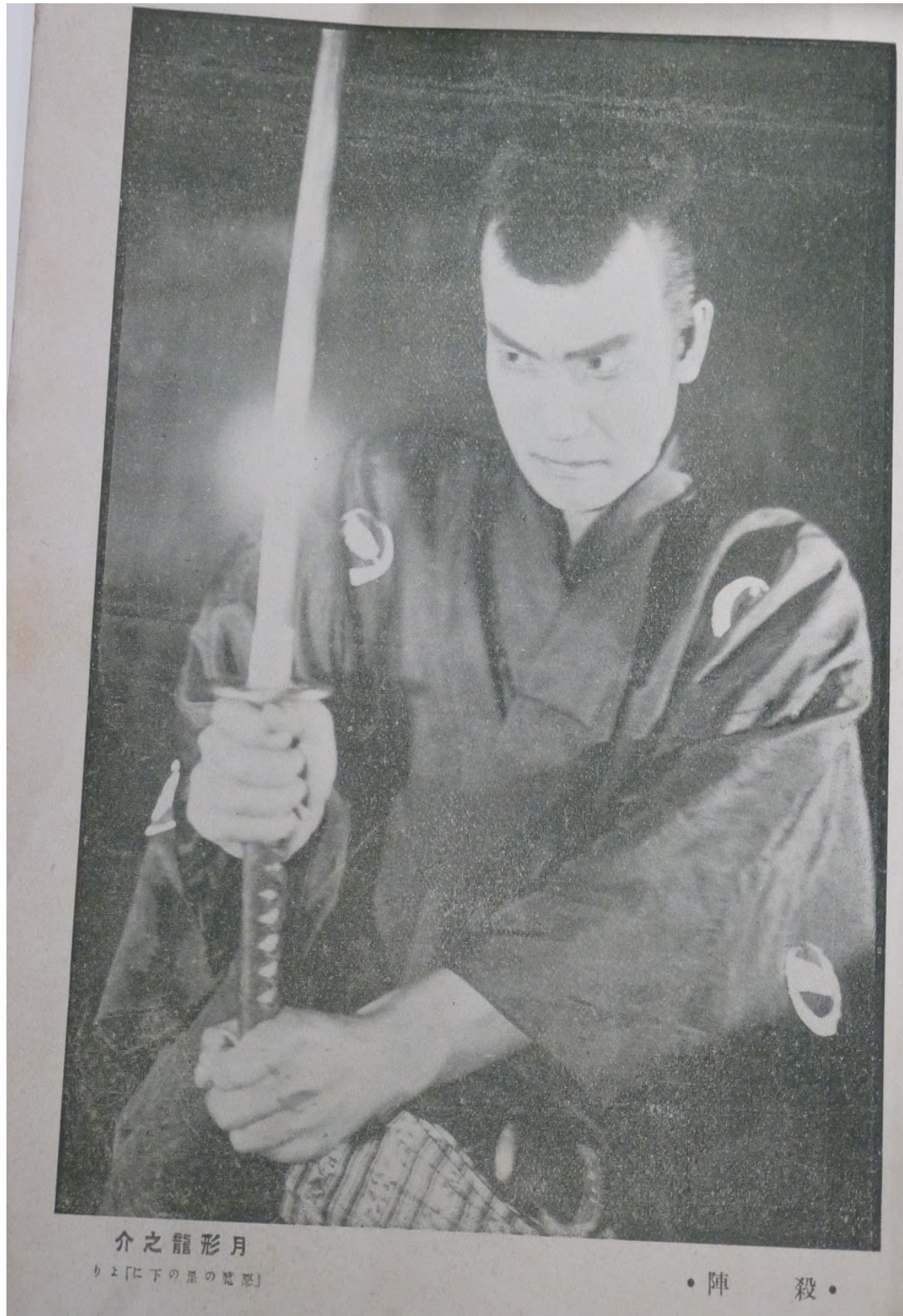


Figure 10: Photograph from a fan magazine of Tsukigata Ryūnosuke in the film *Under the Demon Star* (*Tsukigata Jidai*, 1927)

However, outside the aesthetic of sublime female beauty favored by Tanizaki and the Pure Film Movement, the Japanese film industry already had many male stars. Since 1909, kabuki actor Onoe Matsunosuke had drawn audiences to old school *kyūha* films, and one film historian, Komatsu Hiroshi, argues that he was an implicit target of Pure Film critics. After the Great Kanto Earthquake, *kyūha* films declined in favor of the new *jidai geki* (period drama) genre. By 1925, Japan had discovered its new *jidai geki* star - Bandō Tsumasaburō, or Bantsuma as fans affectionately called him. Like Onoe, Bandō trained as a kabuki actor, but since he was not from a famous kabuki family, he was shut out of many of the best stage roles. As a result, he turned his talents to the new medium of film and was extremely successful. Bandō's *chanbara* films were so popular that he founded his own studio to produce his films, and then a year later converted his company into a subdivision of Universal in order to better access capital and production talent. However, the studio and relationship with Universal collapsed two years later because his *jidai geki* star vehicles were released under Shōchiku rather than Universal, and the films he produced were not strong enough to succeed without his star presence.²³⁹ Despite this, Bandō remained Japan's top cinema star until the widespread introduction of sound in the early 1930s; like many silent stars, his weak voice prevented his successful transition to the talkies. Onoe and Bandō may have been the most famous, but many kabuki-trained actors found a new outlet for their skills in the cinema.

²³⁹ Komatsu, 363-375.

Despite the formidable cinematic presence and commercial success of male stars like Onoe and Bandō, not all theatergoers were satisfied with stars shaped by earlier careers as kabuki actors. Japanese audiences enjoyed the heroic masculinity male stars brought to period dramas, but some critics would have preferred that the Japanese cinema adopt Western-style male stars. In a 1925 *Chūo Kinema (Central Film)* editorial entitled “Actors who can be loved by women”, Ishimaki Yoshio makes the interesting claim that the movies have had little to offer women: though there are many skilled actresses, actors are too often just there as support. Nevertheless, Ishimaki is impressed by many of the young actors appearing in European war films, noting that these are not unlike the brave male heroes of Japanese *jidai geki* films. However, *jidai geki* are often extremely cruel and violent, so what Ishimaki would prefer are romantic films set in the present day starring actors who bring the same star quality as Rudolph Valentino or Francis Bushman.²⁴⁰ Ishimaki’s views were not necessarily shared by the Japanese audiences who preferred *jidai geki* to contemporary dramas or the fans who idolized male *jidai geki* heroes with the same fervor as members of the “Gish Party.” By the time of Ishimaki’s editorial, the Japanese cinema had incorporated many Western representational techniques into native dramatic traditions; yet the critical discourse continued to compare Western and Japanese films. As the sublime female beauties of the late 1910s and early 1920s were superseded by male *jidai geki* stars in film magazines, film critics remained anxious about the relationship between Japanese films and the global silent cinema.

²⁴⁰ Ishimaki Yoshio, “Onna ni sukareru danyū,” *Chūo Kinema*, October 1925, 16-17. Though Yoshio is usually a male given name, I suspect it may be a woman’s pen name since the article seems very knowledgeable about what women want in movie stars.

Actresses' *Ero* Reimagined

By the end of the 1920s, magazine discourses shifted from eroticising the unavailability of screen actresses to completely objectifying actresses. Instead of finding pleasure in the unavailability of actresses, readers were invited to find amusement in scantily clad photographs and scandalous gossip. One article about Hollywood society printed in *Gurotesuku* (*Grotesque*) described a secret, exclusive club for actors, actresses, directors, and other elites. The club was supposedly the site of all kinds of coquettish flirting, late parties, and other more extreme debaucheries. The article implied that many of the actresses associated with Cecil B. DeMille, including Gloria Swanson and Paula Negri, had been dishonored in unprintable ways by the director before becoming famous.²⁴¹ Similar stories were written about Japanese actresses. One article in *Hanzai Kagaku* (*Criminal Science*) collected embarrassing sexual anecdotes about popular Japanese actresses. For example, screen actress Sunada Komako was working for a nameless director who found her attractive. The director wanted to see and film her naked, so he put a bathing scene in the script, then rigged the tub so that the water would become so warm that Sunada would jump out in surprise while the camera was rolling. In another story, Akiyama Shizue dropped her handbag, and as her mother helped her pick up her things, she discovered medication

²⁴¹ Yohena Kiyoshi, "Ginmaku ura kyōtai hiwa," *Gurotesuku*, April 1929, 184-186; Reprinted in *Gurotesuku* 3, ed. by Shimamura Teru, (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2016). Yohena is credited as an actor on some of the films by the film company *Eiga geijutsu kyōkai* (1920-1924) associated with the Pure Film Movement.

for a sexually transmitted disease. Akiyama turned bright red and tried to claim it was the wrong medicine in her embarrassment. A third actress, Chihaya Asako, had been posing for promotional pictures all day when a fan asked to take her picture. He repeatedly pressured her before finally giving up, but she found out later that he had cut out pictures of her head and pasted them on obscene pictures.²⁴² The men in the anecdotes were anonymous, perhaps so the reader could more easily identify with them as they sexually humiliated popular actresses. These discourses were a complete reversal of the dreams of Tanizaki and the Pure Film Movement, who eroticized the distance between star and fan. Instead, actresses in the *ero-guro* magazines of the late 1920s were normal women, involved in real or imagined sexual scenarios. For these writers, actresses had *ero*, but it was far from sublime.

Discourses about the sublime appeal of cinema actresses offered compensation for critics and writers' anxieties over debates on women's role in society and the Japanese film industry's lack of international success. Tanizaki first described Western actresses, but not Japanese actresses, as sublime in *The Women's Review*, a magazine aimed at educated women that published works by notable male writers of the day. The commentators struck a delicate balance between praising women while maintaining that women could only be sublime through the eyes of male writers like themselves. Similarly, critics and authors associated with the Pure Film Movement believed that the representational techniques used in the Japanese cinema made it

²⁴² Tomizawa Shōjirō, "Kinema joyū erokan jidai," *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1932, 198; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 13* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008).

impossible for Japanese actresses to produce the same feelings of the sublime as Western women, even as the mix of beauty, awe, and impassible distance made the expressive faces of actresses an important attraction of silent film. Yet by the end of the 1920s, the male stars of action-filled period dramas dominated the Japanese film industry, and *ero-guro* magazines rejected sublime eroticism and turned instead to backstage gossip and embarrassing anecdotes about Japanese and American actresses alike. Nevertheless, discourses around sublime silent film actresses offered a way to enjoy watching unavailable foreign actresses despite anxiety over the changes in women's roles in society and the lack of success Japanese films had abroad.

Chapter 03

The New Abnormal: Understanding Mental Illness and Modern Perception Through *Hentai*

Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, many Japanese writers associated the conditions of modernity with poor mental health. In an article on neurasthenia for *Fujin Kōron* (*The Women's Review*), Mitsui Nobuei writes: "A large majority of modern people are sick. For no apparent reason, serious cases continue to moan day and night in the hospitals of the world. And it is not the case that the patients have confidence in the medicines given by doctors. Even if they do have confidence, doctors do not have time to treat them."²⁴³ Neurasthenia encompassed a number of symptoms, including fatigue, weakness, fainting, insomnia, headaches, feelings of heaviness in the head, and palpitations; psychologists differentiated it from other disorders by emphasizing that it was an acquired rather than constitutional disorder. It was both widespread and difficult to treat. The idea of neurasthenia was so popular that in 1917, the *Yomiuri Shinbun* declared neurasthenia Japan's "national disease."²⁴⁴ It was also believed to be a

²⁴³ Mitsui Nobuei, "Kimyō na shinjidaigata no danjyo," *Fujin Kōron*, September 1923, 68-75.

²⁴⁴ Francesca Di Marco, "Act or Disease? The Making of Modern Suicide in Early Twentieth-Century Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 39 (2013): 330-334.

precursor to suicide, and newspapers and magazines began attributing suicide to modernity with sensational headlines such as “A Sacrifice to Modern Culture . . . The Suicide of Tokyo Imperial University Genius Kindaichi.”²⁴⁵ Suicide was a frequent topic of editorials and critical essays, including ordinary individuals and well-known writers like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, not to mention the sensational double suicide of writer Arishima Takeo and reporter Hatano Akiko.²⁴⁶ Like neurasthenia, suicide was frequently interpreted as a result of the psychological effects of modern life.

During the Taisho Period, the question of what was a normal mental state was taken up by academics, writers, and the popular press. The word *hentai* (変態) today is often translated as “pervert” with a strong negative connotation. Initially it had the sense of a living thing such as an insect undergoing transformation, and newspapers at the turn of the century used the word to describe a significant change. Then, *hentai* became associated with the academic disciplines of “abnormal psychology” (*hentai shinri*) and “abnormal sexual desire” (*hentai seiyoku*).²⁴⁷ The influential magazine *Hentai Shinri* (*Abnormal Psychology*) introduced subjects including schizophrenia, telepathy, sadism, masochism, vampires, and mediums into both popular and academic discourses. Japanese scholars of *ero-guro* have identified *Abnormal Psychology* and similar popular psychology magazines as key sites of *ero-guro* mass culture; later magazines like

²⁴⁵ Moiwa Toyohei, “Gendai bunmei no giseisha: Taishō no Fujimura Misao - Teidai shūsai kanedaichi tanin,” *Fujin Kōron*, October 1921, 1-30. Tokyo Imperial University was renamed University of Tokyo in 1947 and remains one of Japan’s most prestigious universities.

²⁴⁶ Arishima Takeo, a well-known writer, became romantically involved with Hatano Akiko, a *Fujin Kōron* reporter who was married. The two committed suicide together in 1923 and *Fujin Kōron* published extensive commentary afterwards.

²⁴⁷ Takeuchi Mizuho, “*Hentai*” to iu bunka: kindai nihon no “chiisana kakumei” (Tokyo: Hitsuji shobō, 2014), 28-29.

Criminal Science (Hanzai Kagaku) and *Grotesque (Gurotesuku)* contained similar articles on the latest research in sexology and abnormal psychology.²⁴⁸ At the same time, the *Shinkankakuha* (New Sensationists or New Impressionists) aesthetic movement made their central project the representation of the author's distinct sensory experiences. Unlike earlier literary movements, the *Shinkankakuha* believed that a unified subjectivity was impossible under modernity and so embraced a fractured, avant-garde style.²⁴⁹ Film, in its capacity as a mechanical record of visual perception as well as its ability to represent psychological states through editing techniques, was central to movement. While *Shinkankakuha* works were not necessarily *ero-guro*, the avant-garde literary movement shared many aesthetic interests and representational techniques with *ero-guro* modernism. The Shinkankakuha Eiga Renmei (New Sensationalist Film League) and Nashonaru Āto Firumusha (National Art Film Company) who jointly produced the film *Kurutta Ippeiji (A Page of Madness, 1926)*, planned to next adapt Edogawa Ranpo's short story, "Dancing Issun Boshi," had it not been a commercial failure.²⁵⁰ The *Shinkankakuha* was well aware that *ero-guro* horror stories and detective fiction provided ideal venues for exploring the ways perception could be altered or misled.

²⁴⁸ Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 156.

²⁴⁹ New Sensationists and New Perceptionists are both close translations of *Shinkankakuha* (新感覚派) commonly used in English language studies; in addition, Aaron Gerow suggests that it should be translated as New Impressionists due to the close relationship with the contemporaneous French Impressionist film school. To avoid confusion, I will use *Shinkankakuha* throughout.

²⁵⁰ Aaron Gerow, *A Page of Madness: Cinema and Modernity in 1920s Japan*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2008), 54. In "Dancing Issun Boshi," a dwarf working as a circus is tormented by his fellow performers; at the limit of his endurance, he murders the woman who humiliated him on stage and sets the tent on fire. The story ends with the image of him dancing madly as he watches the flames. Originally published in *Shinseinen*, January 1926; see Edogawa Ranpo, "Odoru issun bōshi," in *Hito de nashi no koi* (Tokyo: Sōgen suiri bunko, 1995), 93-107.

The parallel efforts of psychologists, the *Shinkankakuha*, and *ero-guro* modernists at understanding perception and subjectivity under modernity in fields ranging from neurology to literature offered a number of compensations for what appeared to be a crisis of mental health that coincided with a crisis of perception. The increasing rates of suicide and neurasthenia aligned educated, urban Japanese readers with similarly afflicted groups in America, Germany, and other countries, offering proof that Japan was indeed modern. In addition, the rise in new mental problems offered new insight into the inner workings of the mind, and some scholars even proposed that mental disorders were the price of human development. Finally, writers of *ero-guro* fiction as well as the *Shinkankakuha* found new ways of representing the experience of modernity in mental illness, hallucinations, opium use, and optical tricks.

Modernity and Mental Health

Throughout the early twentieth century, Western sociologists and psychiatrists observed that modernity and modern life were having an adverse impact on mental health, as exemplified by increasing suicide rates and the new diagnosis of neurasthenia. Emile Durkheim, in his famous 1897 sociological study of suicide, found no relationship between neurasthenia and the suicide rate. However, he argued that the state of hypercivilization produced a tendency towards anomie, or a feeling of disconnection among members of a society, along with excessively delicate nervous systems which then led to increased suicide rates. His solution was to form widespread

societies of workers, so that individuals would feel connected to other people in their profession and have a security net against the excesses of capitalism. He also proposed that greater social participation would make marriage protective against suicide for women as he showed it was for men.²⁵¹ Similarly, Sigmund Freud wrote in his 1930 study *Civilization and its Discontents*, “our so-called civilization itself is to blame for a great part of our misery, and we should be much happier if we were to give it up and go back to primitive conditions.” He believed this was because society required its members to repress many of their instincts and desires: “men become neurotic because they cannot tolerate the degree of privation that society imposes on them in virtue of its cultural ideals.” Thus, the price of civilization was a loss of happiness through the high levels of guilt that enforce the suppression of natural instincts.²⁵² Even in the middle of the twentieth century, psychologists blamed society as a whole for the poor mental health of its members. In *The Sane Society*, Erich Fromm disagreed with Freud that repressed urges were the source of people’s unhappiness, arguing instead that modern capitalist society was not structured in a way that individuals could satisfy their basic human needs. Thus, a mentally healthy society “*must be defined in terms of the adjustment of society to the needs of man*, of its role in furthering or hindering the development of mental health.”²⁵³ The influence of these theorists, as well as their separation in space and time, demonstrates how widespread the belief that modernity and modern civilization adversely affect mental health was.

²⁵¹ Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2002), 262, 287, 341-353.

²⁵² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2005), 68-69, 135-138.

²⁵³ Erich Fromm, *The Sane Society* (New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1955), 72.

On an individual level, the diagnosis of neurasthenia exemplified the belief that modernity produced mental disorders. Popularized by a number of American doctors, neurasthenia encompassed a number of symptoms, including fatigue, weakness, fainting, anxiety, depression, and palpitations. Michigan doctor Edwin Van Deusen published the first article on neurasthenia in 1869; however, his work was not widely accepted by the medical profession because he was an alienist, specializing in asylums and institutionalized patients, and his subjects were rural farm wives. In contrast, neurologist George Beard was much more successful in popularizing the disease; he limited the diagnosis to middle and upper class protestant white patients and framed it as a result of hard work and modern life. Following Beard's example, S. Weir Mitchell successfully marketed neurasthenia to the very wealthy and promoted rest cures for upper class women.²⁵⁴ Neurasthenia met with mixed reactions abroad. British neurologists were more concerned with disorders that showed structural traces on the body, and left diagnoses like neurasthenia to psychiatrists. In Germany, neurologists like Wilhelm Erb and Paul Julius Möbius emphasized the external causes of the disease that were conditions of modernity, including urbanization, railways, telegraph and telephone lines, and the competitive nature of industry and commerce.²⁵⁵ Moreover, given the often explicitly racial character of neurasthenia, the prevalence of the diagnosis had a positive aspect for the Japanese reading public. Beard explicitly excluded American Indians and American blacks from neurasthenia, asserting that their

²⁵⁴ David G. Schuster, *Neurasthenic Nation: America's Search for Health, Happiness, and Comfort* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 8-34.

²⁵⁵ Marijke Gijswitj-Hofstra, "Introduction: Cultures of Neurasthenia from Beard to the First World War," in *Cultures of Neurasthenia from Beard to the First World War*, ed. by Marijke Gijswitj-Hofstra and Roy Porter (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 8-11.

“immature minds” and lack of curiosity prevented them from getting the disease.²⁵⁶

Thus, the presence of neurasthenia in Japan implicitly aligned urban readers with the German and American middle and upper classes, validating their belief that Japan had achieved a comparable level of cultural development.

Abnormal Psychology in the Taishō Press

As part of the widespread reforms of the Meiji Period (1868-1912), the Japanese medical community began to conceptualize suicide and serious mental illnesses as a public health problem that required a national response. At the time, mental illness was frequently interpreted as a form of spirit possession. These beliefs continued despite increasing attempts by the Meiji government to promote rational and “enlightened” medicine. Mental patients obtained treatment by traveling to temples and shrines along with family members. Treatment often involved bathing under sacred waterfalls or in hot springs and receiving incantations and prayers from religious healers.²⁵⁷ The Meiji government, through the passage of the Medical Act (*Isei*) in 1874, established a national network of medical schools and licensing examinations based on Western medicine. In 1900, the Mental Patient’s Custody Act addressed the treatment of those regarded as dangerous lunatics. The Act legally regulated an older system of confinement at home or in institutions, while also establishing criminal penalties for false

²⁵⁶ Quoted in Schuster, 22.

²⁵⁷ Hashimoto Akira, “Psychiatry and religion in modern Japan,” in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, ed. by Christopher Harding, Iwata Fumiaki, and Yoshinaga Shin’ichi (London and New York: Routledge, 2015),51-59.

confinement. As was the case prior to the Act's passage, a family member was expected to serve as guardian for the afflicted person.

Japanese psychology professors trained in Germany introduced biological psychiatric theories in their classes, which conceived of suicide and mental illness as the products of disordered minds which could, through modern science, be treated. One of the most prominent psychiatrists of the period, Kure Shuzō, studied psychology in Germany before publishing one of the first Japanese psychology textbooks in 1889; later, he was a professor at the Imperial University of Tokyo from 1901 to 1925. In a series of academic and popular works, he proposed that anyone showing anti-social behaviors (such as alcoholism or love affairs) or physical impairments was more prone to suicide and should be kept under medical observation for six months to a year. He also argued that suicide was a form of madness and a crisis of public health. Because of his belief that mental health was as important for society as physical health, he supported the 1919 Mental Hospitals Act, which funded the construction of prefectural public asylums as well as treatment at private asylums.²⁵⁸ Kure was also motivated by his studies of traditional therapies, which he found at best had no effect. While bathing under waterfalls could act as a variation on western hydrotherapy, he found that many traditional institutions forcibly treated patients or had cases where patients died under punishment or treatment.²⁵⁹ Reformers like Kure sought to bring mental health treatment in Japan in line with Western medical standards while also reducing ineffective treatment and poor conditions for patients.

²⁵⁸ Di Marco, 330-334; Christopher Harding, "Religion and psychotherapy in modern Japan: A four-phase view," in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, 27-28.

²⁵⁹ Hashimoto, 60-64.

There was also concern for mental disorders and nervous conditions that did not merit confinement but at the same time seemed to be an increasing part of modern life, such as neurasthenia. Morita Masatake, the founder of Morita Therapy and one of Kure's students, as well as Kure himself published works on neurasthenia in 1909 and 1914, respectively.²⁶⁰ Neurasthenia was frequently discussed in scientific and general interest magazines, and was believed to be caused by the stresses of modern life. Most approaches to curing neurasthenia required the acknowledgement and validation of the patient's subjective experience along with a respite from normal activities. Neurasthenia was translated into Japanese as mental weakness (*shinkeisuijyaku*, 神経衰弱) or mental temperament (*shinkeishitsu*, 神経質); the latter term was coined by Morita in 1921 because he believed neurasthenia was related to an inherent characteristic of the patient as well as a result of social and environmental influences.²⁶¹

Academic and medical discourses about mental conditions like neurasthenia appeared in articles in general interest and literary journals as well. Shimoda Kōzō, a medical doctor, wrote an article for *Fūjin Kōron* in 1925 comparing hysteria and neurasthenia. After acknowledging that both conditions seemed deceptively similar to a non-specialist, he wrote that hysteria is hereditary and mostly seen in women, while neurasthenia is acquired and mostly seen in men. The main symptom of neurasthenia was debilitating nervous anxiety about some uncontrollable bad event that cannot be rationalized away, like the ceiling of a lecture hall collapsing, a cerebral hemorrhage, or

²⁶⁰ Kenji Kitanishi and Kyoichi Kondo, "The Rise and Fall of Neurasthenia in Japanese Psychiatry," *Transcultural Psychiatric Research Review* 31 (1994): 137-152. Morita Masatake is also read as Morita Shomu.

²⁶¹ Kondo Kyoichi and Kitanishi Kenji, "The mind and healing in Morita therapy," in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, 111.

even dropping a jug of water. Other symptoms could include extreme phobias or repeated compulsions, as well as headaches and mental fatigue. Interestingly, while Shimoda had little difficulty describing the symptoms of neurasthenia, he was less concrete about a cause, suggesting only that it was acquired and tied to some moment of stress or exhaustion. Moreover, it was a disease that defies an easy cure since worrying about symptoms paradoxically seems to make those symptoms worse.²⁶² Shimoda's article, directed at an audience outside of medical discourses, shows that the popular understanding of neurasthenia encompassed a large number of intractable symptoms that seemed somehow rooted in modern life. Many of the symptoms of neurasthenia could only be evaluated subjectively by the patient, making it easy for skeptics to dismiss. Neurasthenia was also a gendered condition, something experienced by men who were oversensitive to the mental shocks of modern life, but not to women who experienced mental problems because of their gender. Nevertheless, the frequent discussion of neurasthenia along with the idea that modern life was causing mental problems suggests that it was a feeling shared by many of the magazine's educated, urban male readers.

Some magazines even specialized in psychological research aimed at professional psychologists, academics, as well as educated readers. One of the earliest examples is *Hentai Shinri (Abnormal Psychology)*. It was founded and published by Nakamura Kokyō in October 1917; Morita Masatake served as adviser for the magazine. Nakamura was a writer and literary critic whose brother had died while

²⁶² Shimoda Kōzō, "Hisuteriishitsu to shinkeishitsu," *Fujin Kōron*, September 1926, 68-85.

hospitalized for schizophrenia. The magazine published articles by widely respected psychologists alongside essays on literature and psychoanalysis. The two also established the Society for Japanese Psychiatry, which emphasized an understanding of mental illness that considered the broad social context, and adopted the position that neurasthenia was the result of specific conditions in the patient's underlying psychology as well as physiological exhaustion. Many members of the society had backgrounds in law or literature, rather than medicine, contributing to an interdisciplinary approach to understanding abnormal psychology.²⁶³ Both Morita and Nakamura wanted to understand mental illness and reduce the stigma surrounding mental abnormality. For example, in the second issue one psychologist reframed the distinction between abnormal and normal as "the difference between ideals and reality," remarking that everyone had some form of mental abnormality.²⁶⁴ The writers featured in *Hentai Shinri* reassured their readers that their mental weaknesses and eccentricities made them normal modern subjects.

One common finding in *Abnormal Psychology* was the connection between modern life and abnormal mental states. In a July 1922 article, psychologist Terada Sei'ichi argued that modern life (*gendai seikatsu*) was creating more abnormal people. This was not necessarily a negative development; he described how height falls along a normal curve and then argued that people's dispositions followed a similar bell curve, meaning that modernity was also producing more singular geniuses than had existed

²⁶³ Anzai Junko, "Hentai shinri no koro no morita masatake," in *'Hentai' nijūmensō*, ed. by Takeuchi Mizuho (Tokyo: Rokka Shuppan, 2016), 38-39; Kondo Kyoichi and Kitanishi Kenji, "The mind and healing in Morita therapy," in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, 110-115.

²⁶⁴ Ueno Yoichi, "Seitai to hentai," *Hentai Shinri*, November 1917, 84; reprinted in *Hentai Shinri 1* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2001). Ueno later became known for his work in industrial and organizational psychology.

before. The most defining characteristic of modern life was living in cities with factories, stores, traffic, and ever increasing population. Then, because cities brought together many people who did not know each other, people in cities were becoming more individualistic and eccentric. At the same time, the pace of urban life was constantly growing faster, and subjected people to many strong mental shocks (*shigeki*). Terada concluded that people should take care of their health and research should be done on how to protect mental hygiene.²⁶⁵ On one hand, Terada believed that modern city life was the cause of mental abnormalities; on the other, he also suggested that more geniuses and abnormally brilliant individuals will develop as a result of modernity. Though Terada emphasizes the negative differences between modern life and the past, his emphasis on the increasing numbers of exceptional people can be read as a compensatory benefit.

Neurasthenia, the most commonly cited condition resulting from the mental shocks and mental stress of modern life, merited a special issue. Morita's conception of mental illness was based on Western medical and psychoanalytic principles, but also incorporated Eastern philosophy, such as the Buddhist principle that desire is the root of suffering.²⁶⁶ Morita himself contributed an article to the special issue discussing how the condition could be cured. He acknowledged that neurasthenia has individual and environmental causes; some individuals were born with a weak temperament while others developed illness due to physical or mental shocks. For all cases, he

²⁶⁵ Terada Sei'ichi, "Gendai seikatsu to henkotosha," *Hentai Shinri*, July 1922, 2-9; reprinted in *Hentai Shinri 19* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2001). He does not give specific examples of geniuses arising from the conditions of modernity.

²⁶⁶ Kondo Kyoichi and Kitanishi Kenji, "The mind and healing in Morita therapy," in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, 110-115.

recommended the following treatment based on the latest Western scholarship as well as his own clinical experience:

1. Absolute rest
2. Slowly begin light work
3. Increase physical and mental work
4. Gradually practice one's living

Though Morita said that neurasthenia can be caused by physical or mental shock, the examples he gave explaining his treatment make clear that his patients were at least middle class. The phases of complete rest and light work could last for weeks, and his examples of returning to one's own living were a writer beginning to write again and a student gradually resuming his studies. Then, in his suggestions for preventing the development of neurasthenia, he remarked that it seemed to be most common among students and those doing intellectual labor in a competitive environment, and so recommended fostering a strong connection with the natural world.²⁶⁷ Morita had the most successful approach to understanding and treating neurasthenia and similar disorders, since variations on his therapies are still used today.²⁶⁸ His analysis of the condition and its treatment and prevention shows that patients were students or people doing mental labor with the ability to quit work and pursue rest and therapy. At the same time, he suggested that neurasthenia and conditions like it were part of the price of advancing society and culture, thereby giving value to patients' suffering.

Abnormal Psychology also approached the problem of understanding the human mind through literary and psychoanalytic methods. Psychoanalysis was widely known

²⁶⁷ Morita Masatake, "Shinkei sui'yaku ni taisuru yo no tokuchō ryōhō," *Hentai Shinri*, April 1921, 420-446; reprinted in *Hentai Shinri 14* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2001).

²⁶⁸ Kondo Kyoichi and Kitanishi Kenji, "The mind and healing in Morita therapy," in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, 110-115.

throughout the Taisho period, and in fact, the first Japanese psychoanalytic papers were published by Morooka Son in 1912 and 1913. His early work included translations of works by Otto Ranke, alongside a psychoanalytic reading of a section of *The Tale of Genji*. Morooka validated both individual subjectivity as well as culturally important works for the Japanese.²⁶⁹ However, psychoanalysis always struggled to attain the same level of scientific respectability as the medical models of mental illness advocated by Kure and the academic establishment. Even Yasuda Tokutaro, who translated Freud's *Introductory Lectures and Studies on Hysteria* in 1927 and 1930, respectively, complained that he had become a target of derision by both Marxist and mainstream intellectuals and would not translate any more of his works.²⁷⁰ On the other hand, criticism of Freud's work had a productive influence on Kosawa Heisaku. He studied Pure Land and Nichiren Buddhism alongside psychoanalysis, and applied Freud's techniques to Buddhist stories. Most famously, he submitted a thesis on guilt titled "Two Types of Guilt - Ajase Complex" to Freud himself in 1932 when he was studying at the Vienna Psychoanalytical Research Institute. He contrasts the story of Ajase, a king who killed his mother, that appears in two Buddhist sutras, with Freud's Oedipus Complex. Kosawa describes Oedipus as killing his father because he loves his mother, which he argues is different from Ajase who killed his mother though he loves her. The presence of the Ajase complex shows that guilt is not universally centered on deference to the father, as Freud argued in his discussion of the Oedipus Complex. However, Kosawa's work did not gain widespread international recognition until his student, Okonogi Keigo,

²⁶⁹ Yasuhiko Taketomo, "Cultural Adaptation to Psychoanalysis in Japan," *Social Research* 57 (1990): 955-956

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 975.

popularized it after his death in 1968.²⁷¹ Psychoanalysis had an ambiguous position in Taisho and early Showa Japan; though many psychologists working from medical models looked down on its methodology, others found that psychoanalysis gave useful insights into normal and abnormal psychology.

Abnormal Psychology frequently included articles on psychoanalytic methods or using psychoanalytic approaches; because Nakamura's background was in literature and criticism his magazine was likely a natural fit. For example, one article by Oguma Toranosuke addresses the nature of disordered or confusing dreams. He quotes a Japanese translation of Mercutio and Romeo's dialog from Act 1 Scene 4, where Mercutio colorfully describes how Queen Mab rides through the dreams of different people. Oguma explains that Shakespeare uses dreams to show a character's true feelings as well as develop philosophical truths, following V.F. Hildebrand's analysis. Hildebrand was cited by Freud in his 1913 book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Oguma briefly mentioned theories of the meaning of dreams from Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, and Japanese novelist Natsume Sōseki before concluding that there is much research to be done in interpreting and classifying dreams.²⁷² The mixture of literary references and works by important Western philosophers and psychologists in Oguma's article is typical of the magazine's approach to understanding current problems in

²⁷¹ Iwata Fumiaki, "The Dawning of Japanese Psychoanalysis: Kosawa Heisaku's Therapy and Faith," in *Religion and Psychotherapy in Modern Japan*, 122-127; Kosawa Heisaku, "Two Kinds of Guilt Feelings: the Ajase Complex," in *Freud and the Far East: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the People and Culture of China, Japan, and Korea*, ed. by Salman Akhtar (Lanham, Maryland: Jason Aronson, 2009), 61-70. Kosawa's paper first cites Freud's work on guilt and the Oedipus complex, then tells the story of Ajase and gives his interpretation, and concludes by relating the story of Ajase to a recent patient. This style of argument is typical of psychoanalytic writing at the time.

²⁷² Oguma Toranosuke, "Konranseru yume no seishitsu," *Hentai Shinri*, February 1918, 421-427; reprinted in *Hentai Shinri 2* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2001).

psychology. To give another example, Kubo Yoshihide explained the psychoanalytic and psychological theories of Alfred Adler, a member of Freud's Vienna research group.

²⁷³ For readers who had studied literature, philosophy, or related fields, this type of article showed how their knowledge could be used to explain the psychological problems of modern life.

Abnormal Psychology's mix of psychology and psychoanalysis for an educated, but not necessarily specialist, audience influenced the content of later *ero-guro* magazines as well. Umehara Hokumei, the infamous and influential publisher of *Grotesque*, also produced *Hentai Shiryō (Perverse Materials)*, which contained articles on abnormal psychology and deviant sexual desire. Other *ero-guro* magazines published stories on similar topics ranging from criminal psychology to psychoanalysis. For example, in *Hanzai Kagaku (Criminal Science)*, Hayasaka Chōichirō proposed through two case studies that repressed desires could explain the rise in people exhibiting compulsive behaviors. His first case study was from a psychology journal, twenty-one year old Kimura Renkichi. He compulsively denied that his younger brother was dead, sometimes thirty or forty times in succession. The compulsion was strongest near places like the temple or graveyard where the association with his brother's death was strongest. However, Kimura had never liked or got along well with his brother, so he concluded that the origin of his compulsion was the repression of his dislike for his brother. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, Hayasaka argued that constantly asserting that his younger brother was alive was a reaction formation against

²⁷³ Kubo Yoshihide, "Adorā no hoshōsetsu to shinkeibyō," *Hentai Shinri*, March 1918, 497-515; reprinted in *Hentai Shinri 2* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2001).

the anti-social desire to kill his brother. Next, in a case from his own practice, he described a middle-aged woman with debilitating anxiety. For ten years, she was unable to feel mental peace, which manifested in physical symptoms such as dizziness, and for the past two years, she was not able to leave her house. Hayasaka noted that the physical symptoms started immediately after the woman's mother-in-law had died, and that once the symptoms began she even dreamed of her mother-in-law. The woman's mother-in-law had been critical and harsh, and often drove the woman to tears. Thus, Hayasaka deduced that the woman's illness was the result of her repressed desire to kill her mother-in-law. He reported that through his treatment, she was able to recognize her desire to kill her mother and was released from her physical illness. Hayasaka concludes, based on Freud and his own observation, that "in general, crime must be punished. And in that case, the existence of crime in the unconscious realm must also be punished." The explanation for mental disorders is that compulsions and phobias are the physical manifestation of an unconscious need to punish a criminal desire. As a result, the cure for such illnesses is to recognize and accept the unconscious desire, which will end the physical symptoms.²⁷⁴ Hayasaka's article shows how later magazines continued to use psychoanalytic methods to explain psychological problems. Moreover, his interpretation gives value to his patients' individual experiences by using them to explain human psychology more broadly. Though individual patients suffered from psychological disorders, society as a whole benefitted

²⁷⁴ Hayasaka Chōichirō, "Seishinbyō ni okeru hanzaisei," *Hanzai Kagaku*, May 1931, 20-26.

from the new knowledge produced by the psychologists studying their abnormal conditions.

Educated, urban men were very interested in the new mental illnesses that appeared to be caused by modernity as well as the new methodologies developed for understanding them. *Abnormal Psychology* introduced many psychological theories that offered compensation for mental stress to *ero-guro* discourses: conditions like neurasthenia demonstrated the patient's modern mentality, mental illnesses were the cost of creating new geniuses and carrying human development forward, and neuroses could be psychoanalyzed and used to better understand the underlying structures of the mind. Later *ero-guro* magazines like *Criminal Science* and *Grotesque* published popular psychology articles that continued to show how the study of abnormal psychology offered compensation for readers struggling to cope with modernity.

Literature and the Crisis of Perception

Between January and March 1923, *Abnormal Psychology* sent a questionnaire to members of the literary *bundan* about their personal experiences. Out of 79 respondents, 42 said that they have, had, or may have had an abnormal psychological condition. This result should not be surprising, since many of the writers had personal experiences with neurasthenia or wrote about deviant sexual desire.²⁷⁵ Taisho and early Showa authors considered individual subjective experiences one of the most important

²⁷⁵ Takeuchi, 84-86, 101-103.

qualities of good literature, often including the author's abnormal desires or mental states. Many scholars argue that interiority in literature is crucial for developing the qualities of modern consciousness. Lynn Hunt demonstrates that the epistolary novels of the late eighteenth century showed that all selves had interiority and were deserving of empathy, a process of psychological identification that encouraged ideas of equality and human rights.²⁷⁶ In a similar fashion, Satoru Saito argues that detective stories in Japan, like European epistolary novels, contributed to the development of a modern subjectivity by showing the inner psychology of their characters.²⁷⁷ The Japanese literary world of the Taishō Era was heavily influenced by Naturalist writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Emile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant. They were concerned with the search for "truth," usually found in the authors' subjective personal experience and described through the use of colloquial, first person language.²⁷⁸ This was the defining characteristic of I-novels (*watakushi shōsetsu*), which dominated the Japanese literary world beginning with Tayama Katai's novel, *Futon* (1907). Critics have argued that the emphasis on interiority in literature at this time was an effect of the trauma of modernity, which is marked by fragmentation and dissolution.²⁷⁹ At the same time, many authors did feel they had abnormal mental conditions and wanted to describe that part of their experience. Thus, abnormal mental states represented both personal experience as well as the experience of modernity.

²⁷⁶ Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 48-49.

²⁷⁷ Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 5-7.

²⁷⁸ Though Zola and Tolstoy viewed their works as objective and scientific experiments into human nature, Naturalism was translated into Japanese as "*shizenshugi*" and interpreted as representing what appeared "naturally" to the author.

²⁷⁹ Seiji M. Lippit, *Topographies of Japanese Modernism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 7.

By the mid 1920s, the search for truth within subjective experience was taken up by the *Shinkankakuha*, or New Sensationists. The name refers to the emphasis on describing individual experiences of perception; however, they emphasized visual perception more than any other sense perception in their work. Chiba Kameo, a literary critic, was the first to apply the name to a group of writers who founded the literary journal *Bungei Jidai (The Age of Literature)*, published between 1924 and 1927. Two of the leading figures, Kawabata Yasunari and Yokomitsu Riichi, acknowledged the movement's roots in European avant-garde movements, including Futurism, Cubism, Dada, expressionism, symbolism, and constructivism, but did not consider distinctions between these movements significant in part because all arrived in Japan at about the same time.²⁸⁰ For example, both Dada and Surrealism attracted attention in Japan around 1925, so rather than seeing Surrealism as developing from Dada, Japanese artists and writers responded directly to the theories of each movement. Similarly, the influential Futurist-Constructivist-Dadaist collective MAVO was most strongly influenced by Constructivism's belief in art to serve a social purpose while also embracing Dada's linguistic anarchy in their writings.²⁸¹ The *Shinkankakuha* considered the representation of modernity and modern sensorial experience the main task of literature, and explored many techniques from the European *avant-garde* to that end. However, as Seiji Lippit argues, "the focus on 'sensation' in these writings thus suggests a failure of understanding, of the capacity to integrate cultural and social phenomena

²⁸⁰ Lippit, 78-79.

²⁸¹ Majella Munro, "Dada and Surrealism in Japan," in *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, ed. by David Hopkins (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2006), 195-215, ProQuest Ebook Central.

into a coherent whole.”²⁸² Critics have rightly observed that the *Shinkankakuha* failed to express a unified subjectivity and excluded discussion of the Colonial other even as they reckoned with Western influences. Nevertheless, the group was significant in its efforts to describe the experience of modernity by emphasizing sensory perception.

The *Shinkankakuha* were particularly interested in the type of visual perception that imitated the automatic recording of a filmmaker’s camera. Kawabata described his narrative style in *Asakusa Kurenidan* (*Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, 1930) as akin to “the succession of images in a newsreel film.”²⁸³ Similarly, literary critic Inoue Yoshio wrote in 1930 that Kitagawa Fuyuhiko’s recent poetry had developed from a belief in the human eye to “that which is all the more precise, all the more objective: to the machine eye - to the lens.”²⁸⁴ These writers and critics were all attuned to the ability of the film camera to capture the new modes of visual perception associated with modernity. As Jonathan Crary has observed about the relationship between cinema and perception, “film became a validation of the perceptual disorientations that increasingly constituted social and subjective experience.”²⁸⁵ Unlike human perception, the film camera records each detail of a scene with the same degree of precision - a kind of nonselective eye. Furthermore, even in early narrative films, such as Edwin O Porter’s *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), the camera does not have a fixed position, moving into, out of, and

²⁸² Lippit, 82.

²⁸³ Quoted in Lippit, 126.

²⁸⁴ Quoted in William O. Gardener, “Japanese Modernism and ‘Cine-Text’: Fragment and Flow at Empire’s Edge in Kitagawa Fuyuhiko and Yokomitsu Riichi,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms*, ed. by Mark Wollaeger and Mark Eatough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), <http://oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195338904.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195338904>.

²⁸⁵ Johnathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1999), 345.

onto the train.²⁸⁶ The *Shinkankakuha* mimicked the visual and narrative effects of film in their writing as a strategy for representing how they perceived modern life.

Moreover, these literary explorations of visual perception and subjectivity were not distinct from efforts by psychologists and psychoanalysts. As Walter Benjamin observed, "the film has enriched our field of perception with methods which can be illustrated by those of Freudian theory."²⁸⁷ In other words, both film and Freudian theory were complementary tools for understanding human behavior and human perception. Film makes it easier to analyze the minute details of human behavior, just as psychoanalysis draws attention to minute details of a conversation, such as the Freudian slip of the tongue. Thus, "the camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses."²⁸⁸ For Benjamin, the invention of photography and motion pictures offered a new method for understanding visual perception; in addition, film could represent previously un-representable aspects of perception. For example, the Surrealists were particularly interested in the capacity for writing and film to represent unconscious and hallucinatory visions. As Martin Jay has commented, cinema "brilliantly realizes the Surrealist project of generating meaning without recourse to the logical entailments of conventional language."²⁸⁹ In Japan, the culmination of efforts to represent visual perception as well as unconscious and hallucinatory states was the *Shinkankakuha* film, *Page of Madness* (*Kurutta Ippeiji*,

²⁸⁶ Crary, 344-352.

²⁸⁷ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2019), 187.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 189.

²⁸⁹ Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 147.

1926). The film coupled innovative visual effects with a narrative set in an insane asylum to represent the experience of modernity.

Optical Horrors and Cinematic Visions

Though the *Shinkankakuha* writers intended for their work to appeal to a literary rather than popular audience, many authors of detective fiction had already begun to question conventional understandings of visual perception. In particular, detective fiction shifted from emphasizing complex puzzles and series of rational deduction to erotically charged, grotesque horror during the Taisho Period. These stories foregrounded visual perception because witness statements, photographs, fingerprints, and other clues relied on correct visual identification or comparison. However, detective stories also recognized the problem of relying on visual perception since they showed how a savvy criminal could subvert its supposed truth value.

Ero-guro detective fiction authors problematized the genre's reliance on visual observation as a primary means of determining truth when the nature of visual perception was being questioned. For example, "The Man Wearing Black" by Kōga Saburō is remarkable in the way it conveys the protagonist's panic during a temporary loss of vision, despite the plot's convoluted melodrama.²⁹⁰ As Kamiyama Yoshio sits in

²⁹⁰ Kamiyama Yoshio visits an eye doctor for what he thinks is a trachoma. The doctor gives him some eye drops and warns him not to open his eyes. He becomes increasingly concerned about the painful drops and the lack of response from the doctor. He opens his eyes and sees the doctor dead with a knife in his back. He leaves the office in a panic, still mostly blinded by the eye drops, only to be pulled into a cafe by a man wearing black who warns him not to say anything to anyone about what happened. Unfortunately, Kamiyama is arrested and spends four months in prison because he felt he needed to keep his promise to the man in black. He's released after the cafe waiter comes forward and attests that

an optometrist's exam chair, unable to see because of the painful drops the doctor had put in his eyes, his mind rushes through all the terrifying possibilities - what if there was a fire, or an earthquake, or a murderer? What could he do, without being able to see? He even remarked, in an obligatory nod to the genre, "at that time, I had already become a person in a detective story."²⁹¹ The accompanying illustration by Mizushima Niou further conveys Kamiyama's psychological turmoil. He is seated in a chair in the center of the image, eyes tightly closed and hands shaking. He is beset on all sides by images representing his fears; fire, clouds of smoke or dust, a lightning bolt, and a dark hand all threaten him. An eye looms from the upper left quadrant, signifying the importance of vision in verifying the existence of his fears and mounting a defense against them while also suggesting the fundamental impossibility of definitively knowing the truth of someone else's perception. Then, Kamiyama experiences a terrifying new possibility - he opens his eyes and sees the doctor lying dead with a knife in his back. His loss of vision not only makes him an easy target of murder, it also enables an unknown third party to frame him as the doctor's killer. He cannot see the real killer, and has no way of convincing the police that he was unable to see at the time of the murder. What is interesting here is the way Kamiyama's existential terror at losing his vision is conflated with his fear of being mistaken for a murderer; the loss of visual

he was still mostly blind when he was in the cafe and so could not have committed the murder. Then, the man in black explains that the eye doctor and his wife had taken his half-sister abroad and encouraged her addiction to morphine in order to embezzle her fortune. The man had planned to kill the doctor but he accidentally killed himself with a syringe of morphine he had intended to use on Kamiyama. See Kōga Saburō, "Kokui o matou hito," *Taishū Bungei*, January 1926, 78-112.

²⁹¹ Kōga, 86.

perception threatens his sense of self even as the incriminating murder threatens his social identity in the law-abiding, non-murdering middle class.



Figure 11: Illustration for “The Man Wearing Black,” (*Taishū Bungei*, January 1926)

Edogawa Ranpo, best known for his ero-guro detective fiction, similarly explored the precarity of vision in his works. His novel, *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island* (*Panoramatō Kitan*, 1926), features a protagonist, Hitomi Hirosuke, who is able to construct his dream island by understanding optical illusions and visual perception better than ordinary people. Hitomi (人見) is written with the characters for “person” and “to see” and sounds the same as the word for the pupil of the eye, and the first character in Hirosuke (廣介) means “wide;” together, his name suggests an expansive, panoramic vision. Kitami Kogoro, the detective who uncovers his crimes, has the same character for “to see” in his family name, but where Hirosuke uses the character for wide, Kogoro (小五郎) uses the character for small, and it is through observing minute details that Kitami is able to uncover Hitomi’s crimes.²⁹² The novel title, as well as the names of the main characters, indicate Ranpo’s overarching interest in visual perception throughout the novel.

Panorama Island itself relied on optical illusions inspired by *nisemono*, or sideshows, as well as the cinema to create its effects. During the nineteenth century, panoramas which placed the viewer at the center of a large cylindrical painting were extremely popular in Europe and America, as touring exhibitions and centerpieces of world exhibitions. Panoramas became popular in Japan around 1890, when the first panorama was constructed. As a boy, Ranpo had frequented the many *nisemono*, or sideshows, in his native city of Nagoya. He later described his experience of visiting a panorama of the Battle of Port Arthur in a 1926 essay; he was so impressed by the

²⁹² See Edogawa Ranpo, *Panorama-tō kitan*, (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2009); also noted by Gerbert, xi-xiii.

experience that he reenacted the experience with his friends the next day. The panorama aestheticized the modern need to survey and control the entirety of a horizon from a single perspective; museums and encyclopedias, which collect and organize art, artifacts, and human knowledge, for the perusal of the subject, perform similar functions. Thus, the pleasure of the panorama is in engaging in the inherently modern project of surveying the entirety of a scene and controlling it through vision.²⁹³ The ability to control and master observable space compensated for the perceptual chaos of modern life. In the same fashion, Hitomi's knowledge of optical tricks allows him to completely control what visitors see and think they see when they enter his island. Like Ranpo's earlier detective stories that showed readers how to navigate the modern city, Hitomi and the detective who uncovers his crimes show the reader how visual perception can be manipulated by cinema and sideshow techniques.

One of the most dramatic illusions of Panorama Island is the underwater glass tunnel connecting it to the mainland. The design of the glass makes ordinary seaweed, shrimp, and fish appear monstrous, magnified to an enormous size and illuminated with electric lights. Chiyoko, the wife of the dead man impersonated by Hitomi, is struck by what she sees as he leads her to the island:

"She felt as if she were being pulled by a magnet. She didn't have the strength to move away. But she recovered some of her composure as little by little she began to realize what was going on. Without moving, she continued to observe the strange spectacle. Then the monster, which was several times larger than a dirigible gasbag, steadily made its way on small, gnarled paws in her direction, shaking the growths piled high on its

²⁹³ Lieven de Cauter, "The Panoramic Ecstasy: On World Exhibitions and the Disintegration of Experience," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 10 (1993): 1-4.; Elaine Gerbert, "Introduction," in *The Strange Tale of Panorama Island* (Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), xiv-xv.

back; in the middle of its enormous head that was turned toward her a mouth gaped so wide that it seemed to split the face in two.”²⁹⁴

The monster is merely a fish, the floating bags are seaweed. But Hitomi’s clever use of optical effects make it appear monstrous to Chiyoko. Nonetheless, the attractions of the island are not entirely natural; he had also hired skilled female swimmers to imitate mermaids around the tunnel. Later, they climb a staircase that appears breathtakingly high but was only a hundred or so steps - another optical illusion using false perspective designed to enhance the appearance of the island.²⁹⁵ Hitomi’s designs skillfully combined the natural and unnatural, enhancing existing features and concealing the man-made aspects of his designs. The result is deeply uncanny - the narrator calls it a “diabolical artifice” - precisely because the line between the island’s natural state and Hitomi’s artistic vision is just perceptible enough to unsettle the viewer.²⁹⁶ As with Hitomi’s impersonation of Komoda, the island’s fundamental horror is that the veracity of visual perception is constantly called into question. Although Chiyoko recognizes the aesthetic beauty of Panorama Island, the constant assault on her ability to rely on the truth of her vision is deeply unsettling. Hitomi’s ability to control what others see is dangerous and powerful, and confers a critical advantage in navigating the modern world.

Ranpo also explored the visual effects of moving pictures in a critical essay titled “The Horror of Cinema,” in which he considers a viewer who deliberately mis-reads the established codes of narrative film. He first compares the experience of viewing a silent

²⁹⁴ Edogawa and Gerbert, 58.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

film to drug use, writing “when I watch a moving picture, I become afraid. They are like the dreams of an opium smoker.” He describes people on film becoming the size of giants, with every pore and mark in the face visible. This alone creates an uncanny effect, which must surely be worse if the giant face is one’s own; Ranpo considers it strange that film actors do not go mad from seeing their own faces blown up to such proportions. Film becomes even more frightening when there are problems with the projection equipment. If the machine pauses, then the giants become frozen like fossils, then in the next instant, turn into living dolls. Or the film can catch fire, and the giants freeze and burst into flames. One time Ranpo watched a spot on a woman’s face turn black from fire. The patterns of the fire first appeared like lipstick, then turned her mouth into a strange sneer before turning into an expanding circle. Watching a face consumed by fire was both “grotesque” and “dreadful.” Worn-out film could give the impression of black rain or a dark ocean filled with strange seaweed.²⁹⁷ Though projection problems annoyed the rest of the audience, for Ranpo they served to increase the terror of cinema by disrupting the film’s mimetic effect. By 1925, when his article was written, Japanese audiences were accustomed to the conventions of narrative film. When problems with the projection disrupted the normal visual patterns, it called attention to the fact that film is not reality but a representation. But Ranpo found a potential pleasure in watching the film with a kind of double vision, misreading cinematic effects for maximum horror.

²⁹⁷ Edogawa Ranpo, “Eiga no kyōfu,” *Fūjin Kōron*, October 1925, 132-136.

Ranpo's commentary on the horrors of "giants" on screen is a clever misreading of cinematic close-ups, arguing that it could be more enjoyable and interesting to deliberately mis-read a film. For example, the projection of an actor is not the same size as the actor is in life, viewers recognize that the actor is of the same scale as the film's setting. Ranpo was likely familiar with the work of German-American psychologist Hugo Munsterberg, author of *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study*.²⁹⁸ Munsterberg's 1916 work is widely considered the earliest example of film theory; it both argues for cinema as an art form independent of theater and explains the psychological phenomenon that allow audiences to interpret the projection of still images as having depth and movement. Both Ranpo and Munsterberg use comparisons between stereoscopic and standard film to show how viewers perceive depth and movement. Stereoscopic film is shot with a double camera, and then projected in two different colors, red and green, on the screen. The audience wears glasses with the left lens in the color of the film shot with the left camera and the right lens with the color shot with the right camera. This gives a strong three-dimensional effect. Nevertheless, even single camera film has the perception of depth from the differences of size, perspective relations, shadow, and movement within the space.²⁹⁹ Munsterberg emphasizes that "we are never deceived; we are fully conscious of the depth yet never take it for real depth."

³⁰⁰ Similarly, the impression of movement is created by a "higher mental process" that

²⁹⁸ Ranpo quotes Munsterberg's work on forensic psychology, *On the Witness Stand*, in his story "D-saka no satsujin jiken" ("The D-Saka Murder Incident"), so it is likely he was familiar with Munsterberg's study of cinema as well.

²⁹⁹ Hugo Munsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, ed. by Allan Langdale, (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 67-68.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

interprets the successive images of the projected film as continuous movement.³⁰¹

Munsterberg describes the way in which an audience knows the movement and depth on the cinema screen are an illusion, but willingly accepts and finds pleasure in the illusion. If the film is shown at the wrong speed or has suffered significant damage, the illusion of depth and movement falls apart. Ranpo and Munsterberg recognized the importance of established film conventions in shaping how an audience interprets what they are seeing on screen as well as the role of psychology in creating effective visual effects; or rather, that both human psychology and experience with film shape an individual viewer's experience of visual perception.

Ranpo also noted the immersive nature of cinema, comparing watching a film to opium use. This comparison had been made some years earlier by Sato Haruō in his short story, "The Fingerprint" (*Shimon*). The story played with the conventions of a classic detective narrative: it is presented as a firsthand account where a friend of the narrator's encounters an unsolved murder, but combines the roles of detective, witness, and prime suspect. The narrator's friend, N, returns to Japan from a long overseas voyage addicted to opium, and after six months in Nagasaki, comes to live with the narrator. A few years later, the two view an American crime thriller together, and N becomes obsessed with a shot with a close-up of a fingerprint two detectives are viewing. N buys stacks of books on fingerprints in Japanese, English, and German and after studying them for two or three months, insists the narrator accompany him to Nagasaki. They investigate a supposedly haunted house, which N claims has a

³⁰¹ Ibid., 77.

basement that was covered by a recent remodel. Some months after they return to Tokyo, N excitedly shows the narrator a film magazine report that William Wilson has mysteriously disappeared. He then shows the narrator a pocket watch with a fingerprint preserved inside the cover that exactly matches the enlarged print from the film. He explains that he knows the house in Nagasaki had a basement because it used to be an opium den that he frequented during his stay there. One night while using opium, he dreamed he saw one man killing another, then woke up to the Chinese opium dealer poking at a dead body on the floor next to him. He paid off the Chinese man and eventually the two hid the body in a pit in the cellar. The pocket watch with the fingerprint had been dropped near the man's body. On watching the movie, N recognized the actor from an opium den in Shanghai; he later bought a still of the fingerprint and found it perfectly matched the fingerprint on the pocket watch. He sent a film company in California a request for a catalog and at the same time sent a letter to the actor, warning him that the Japanese police knew of his lost watch and involvement in a murder at a Nagasaki opium den. Based on when he received the catalog, he estimated that the actor disappeared about a week after receiving the letter. The narrator was not sure what to believe, but three or four years later, and a year after N's death, he happened to read a newspaper article describing the discovery of a body, likely a foreigner, in the hidden basement of the exact house in Nagasaki that he had visited with N. He had thought N was mad, but perhaps he was right about the murder in the opium den.³⁰²

³⁰² See Satō Haruo, *Beautiful Town: Stories and Essays*, trans. by Francis B. Tenny, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 64-105.

The narrator's friend, N, is alternately intoxicated by opium and film viewing. Using this device, the story collapses of the boundaries between the realms of sensory experience; reality or objective truth appears unconfined to any one mode of experience but rather exists in the points of connection between those realities. N dreams he witnessed a murder, and regains consciousness alone near a dead body. Later, he sees a close-up of a fingerprint in an American crime film that matches the fingerprint on the inside of a pocket watch he found near the body. N comes to believe, through an obsession with the cinematic fingerprint and the physical reality of the pocketwatch's fingerprint, that his opium dream and the film are closely linked - or at least that the actor playing the criminal in the film was the opium den murderer. Throughout the story, N's ability to connect his dream experience and the cinematic experience with tangible physical evidence slowly convinces the narrator that N might be the person perceiving the situation correctly:

"When I stare at these fingerprints, I find in them another world. That strange world has become familiar to me. . . . My wife worries that I talk too much about fingerprints, and she seems to think I may be mad. She is said to have asked my friend K, a researcher in mental illness, whether "madness is contagious." I am surely not mad. I say so to my wife. I say so to my readers. To tell the truth, I've recently come to think that N was not mad either."³⁰³

What is ultimately so compelling about the story is that points to a more complicated model of perception and psychological experience. It is not enough for the narrator or N to simply recount their perception of events as they experienced them - N's understanding of events in the opium den is developed through his opium dreams, the

³⁰³ Sato, 97.

diegetic world of the film, and the physical traces he uncovers with the narrator. The relationship between N and the narrator is important as well; N's obsessive, opium addicted perspective is what reveals the connections between reality, delusions, and the cinema. Satō's story uses the similarity between being immersed in a film and using opium to suggest that it is only possible to understand the truth of experience through a state which somehow alters normal perception.

Like Ranpo and Satō, many of the writers, critics, and artists associated with the *Shinkankakuha* were interested in the intersections between cinema and the mind, particularly the capacity of film to depict normal and abnormal mental states. The best example of this is Kinugasa Teinosuke's 1926 film, *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta Ippeiji*). The Shinkankakuha Eiga Renmei (New Sensationalist Film League) and Nashonaru Āto Firumusha (National Art Film Company) who jointly produced the film were invested in presenting the film as important for its artistic merit and ties to the avant-garde³⁰⁴. The film follows a custodian working in an asylum, played by Inoue Masao, in order to be close to his wife, a patient placed there after she drowned their son. Their daughter is engaged to be married, but is abandoned by her fiance when he learns of her insane mother. The film prioritises the exploration of how film techniques can convey the subjective experiences of both the custodian and the asylum patients over linear narrative.

³⁰⁴ Aaron Gerow, *A Page of Madness: Cinema and Modernity in 1920s Japan*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2008), 54. In "Dancing Issun Boshi," a dwarf working as a circus is tormented by his fellow performers; at the limit of his endurance, he murders the woman who humiliated him on stage and sets the tent on fire. The story ends with the image of him dancing madly as he watches the flames. Originally published in *Shinseinen*, January 1926; see Edogawa Ranpo, "Odoru issun bōshi," in *Hito de nashi no koi* (Tokyo: Sōgen suiri bunko, 1995), 93-107.

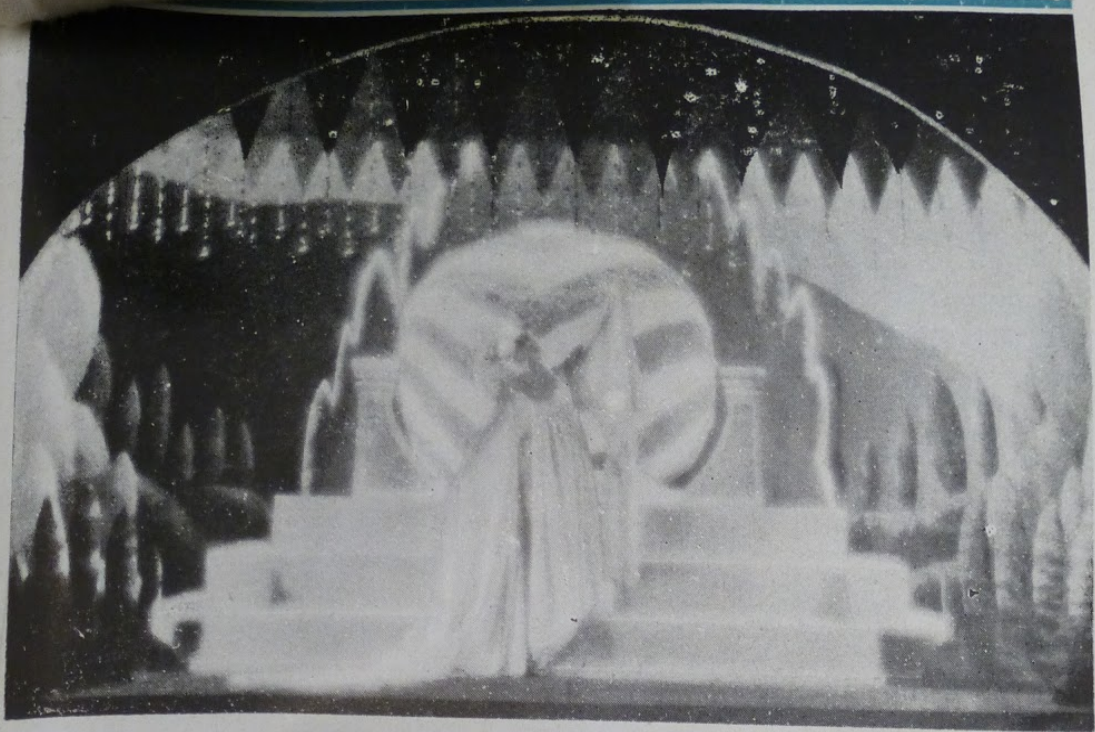


… 作原成康端川 …

… 品作盟聯畫映派覺感新 …



と小使になつてはいりこむ
娘は美しく成長した、青春は戀をしる、一人の青年と結婚しやうとしたが、娘の
なやみは誰が狂人であること、病人は許さくれないか…… と不安
父の苦しみは、狂人の妻が娘の幸福を破壊するかもしれない…… と不安
な懸念……
かくて、狂へる女を中心に、事件はものすごくいんらつに進んで行く……
と奇異な題材、思ひきつた表現、素晴らしい演出、單に本邦のみならず、世界映
畫界に投げつけられた烽火であることを、たれが否定し得やうぞ



… 頁一たつ狂 …

… 監督藍色脚助之貞笠衣 …

ここはいんさんの脳病院の内部
 お父さん……
 あめく……
 怒鳴る……
 叫喚する……
 ……
 そして、そこにこのいたましい一篇の哀話が生れるのである
 妻を失った娘を忘れた船員の逆上は、つひに妻をして發社せしめた
 数年後……
 船員は人生に束れて故郷へ歸つた、そして妻が脳病院に救はれてゐることを知る

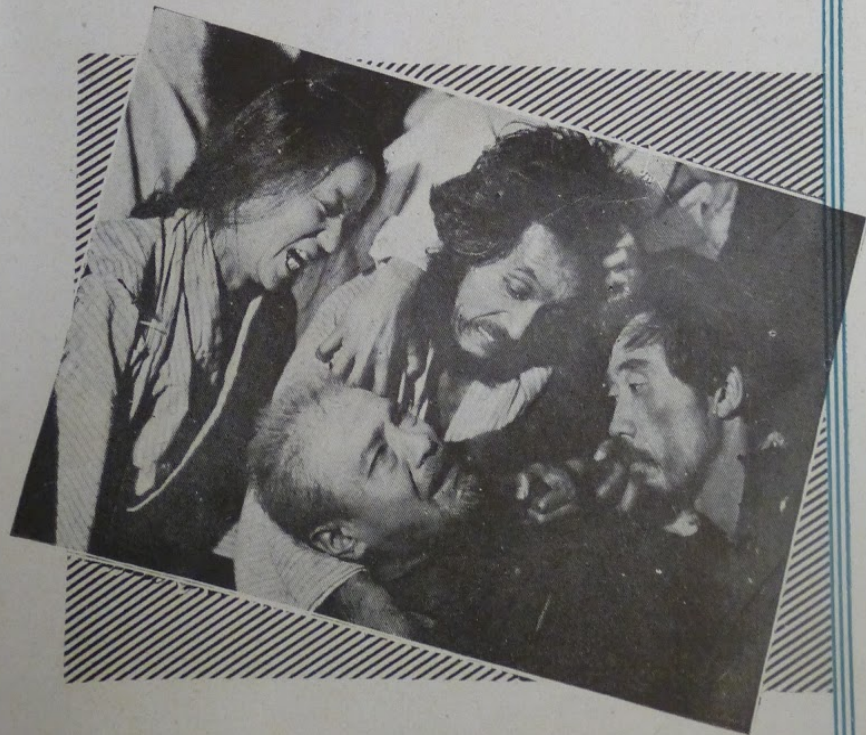


Figure 12: Advertisements for *A Page of Madness*, (*Chūkyō Kinema*, August 1926, 7-8.)

One of the challenges of analyzing *A Page of Madness* is the discrepancies between the extant prints and what appears to have been shown in 1926 and what is described in the scripts used in filming and submitted to government censorship; overall, about twenty-five minutes of film appear to have been lost. Aaron Gerow speculates that Kinugasa himself may have edited out some of the more melodramatic scenes that appear in the censorship script. Kawabata Yasunari wrote the scenario, which is available in translation, but the final film does not strictly follow his original outline.³⁰⁵ There is also the question of how critics and audiences at the time interpreted the film. Many of the responses and critical reviews suggest that the viewers who most liked the film appreciated the innovative camera techniques and commitment to Pure Film principles. On the other hand, one trenchant reviewer wrote: “If *L’Inhumaine* [(Marcel L’Herbier, 1924)] and *A Page of Madness* together are *Shinkankakuha* films, then I hate *Shinkankakua* films. After all, I like normal films.”³⁰⁶ Many critics at the time interpreted *A Page of Madness* as a visual approximation of abnormal mental states; one critic remarked that “I was not necessarily the only one who felt that even viewers would go insane.”³⁰⁷ Another commented that *A Page of Madness* would shock the world of film but complained that the depictions of the patients were difficult for the viewers to feel and suggested that the film should have

³⁰⁵ The script was based on a scenario by Kawabata Yasunari. However, the story seems to have been significantly amended during filming by Kinugasa and other staff members including Inuzuka Minoru, Yokomitsu Riichi, Kataoka Teppei, and Sawada Bunkō, Gerow, 27-43. For an English translation of Kawabata’s scenario, see *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-1932*, ed. by William Jefferson Tyler (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008).

³⁰⁶ “Komatta shinkankakuha,” *Chūkyo Kinema*, August 1926, 45.

³⁰⁷ Quoted in Gerow, 80.

shown more diverse forms of madness.³⁰⁸ Commentators in film magazines agreed that the experimental cinematography and editing, along with new ways of showing madness, were the film's most important contributions.

The famous opening sequence of the film is a series of increasingly quick cuts between a streetlight in the rain, a car, a person in a raincoat, windows, a ladder leaning against a building, a river - these images do not tell a linear story so much as suggest feelings and associations. One critic, Okuya Yoshiyuki, described the sequence in a 1926 review:

“The rhythm is most cinematic in the prologue. There, figures of motion completely dominate figures of stillness, excluding them. The pulse of emotion heats up the nervous flow and, ignoring everything of substance, radiates out. This is a current dynamically swirling amid chaos, a marvelous allegro.”³⁰⁹

Then, a dancer appears on a stage, perhaps as part of a modern-style dance review. The film cuts between the dancer on stage and a woman in a cell at the asylum. A picture on the wall shows the woman in dance costume - is she remembering an earlier life on stage? Or is the asylum not “real”? These opening scenes establish that the film will give equal weight to subjective perceptions and what the narrative indicates is the objective reality of the asylum.

The film continues to use similar techniques of cutting between images to show the thoughts and memories of characters within the film as they are experiencing them.

³⁰⁸ The comment is titled “Madmen and Resonance” (*Kyōjin to raidōsei*). *Raidōsei* is the the feeling of reverberation on hearing loud thunder and the author's main criticism is that the madness in the film does not properly reverberate in viewers when they watch it. “Shinkankakuha eiga no tanjō ni tsuite,” *Chūkyō Kinema*, August 1926, 44.

³⁰⁹ Okuya Yoshiyuki, “View on A Page of Madness,” trans. by Aaron Gerow in *A Page of Madness: Cinema and Modernity in 1920s Japan*, 107.

In an early scene, the custodian looks through a set of bars, and the film cuts to his wife, a patient. Then, there are more shots of the custodian's expression as he watches his wife and reflects on the past; a series of cuts shows running water, an infant, the custodian in a sailor's uniform, a second woman restraining the first as she screams. This sequence indicates his past to the viewers; while he was at sea his wife drowned their infant son and she was placed in the asylum. It depicts the process of remembering as a series of images, which are given importance relative to their emotional effect on the person remembering; the viewer knows these images are important because of the expressions of the custodian who is experiencing their recall. At the same time, this sequence stands in contrast to the abnormal processes of memory of the asylum patients. For example, the dancing patient from the opening sequence has a torn picture of herself in costume, but she seems to exist entirely in the moment of the past performance. Similarly, the custodian's wife recalls images of her husband in the past, represented as a double exposure over the asylum bars, but cannot see him clearly in the present, represented as a shot of the custodian through a distorted lens. Thus, what distinguishes normal memory perception from the abnormal perception of the asylum patients is both a lack of simultaneity - the custodian does not confuse images of the past with the present - and the fixation on a single image or moment of perception rather than a sequence of images or perceptions. Comparing the memory sequences of the asylum patients and the custodian shows what Kinugasa and his production staff understood as the normal experience of remembering through comparison with the abnormal memories.

The opening sequence also establishes the asylum as a site of confinement, in tension with the dreams and hallucinations of various characters; the inmates are kept in numbered cells, windows are barred, and the complex is gated. The doctors, nurses, and the architecture of the building all act to impose an objective reality on the asylum's denizens that is at odds with their own perceptions. The conflict is expressed through the repeated acts of rebellion by the patients coupled with repression from the staff, and most dramatically in the famous patient riot sequence. The sequence begins about thirty minutes into the film, when a nurse leads the custodian's wife through the corridor to her barred cell. The wife stops to watch the mad dancing girl, filmed using double exposure to show both her clothing in the asylum and a dance costume. More and more patients gather to watch the dancing girl, and the film uses a number of effect shots to indicate the patients' altered perceptions of the girl. The shots also establish a contrast between the eroticism of the beautiful dancer, and the grotesque leers of the male patients. Eventually, the staff, including the custodian, is able to subdue the riot and calm the patients. The sequence plays two important roles: it establishes that the custodian is on the side of the staff, and it develops the conflict between the staff's imposition of order and calm and the patients' desire to remain in a state of dreams and hallucinations.

The distinction between the staff, who are grounded in what is presented as objective reality, and the patients, whose visions and perceptions do not match that reality, is central to the journey of the custodian. At the start of the film, he is firmly on the side of the staff, but over the course of the narrative, becomes part of the dreamers.

In his room, he daydreams about winning a lottery; as he imagines rejoicing at his prizes with his daughter, the film cuts to the dancing girl in costume, indicating that his dream is as much a fantasy as hers. He tries to leave the asylum with his wife, and escape the burden her madness has placed on the family, but she will not go with him. The sequence ends when the custodian begins to attack the doctors and nurses with a broom, and he is herded into a cell with his wife. There, he dreams of his daughter's wedding procession, now made doubly impossible since he has been confined as well. Many of the shots show double exposures of the procession over the asylum bars, emphasizing the contrast between what the custodian wants for his daughter and what his reality has become. In one of the final scenes, the custodian passes out Nō masks to his fellow patients, who become calm after putting the masks on. He and his wife appear a happy couple once again. The Nō masks suggest that the conflict between the asylum staff and the patients can only be contained by wearing masks of calm. Now the patients have the appearance of conforming to the reality of the asylum, even as a shot of the girl dancing with a mask implies that the patients' underlying perceptions have not changed. However, the masks allow the patients to perform the pretence of conforming with the staff's expectations while leaving their subjective experiences unchanged. The custodian's narrative begins on the side of sanity but ends on the side of the patients, and proposes that the conflict between society, represented by the asylum and its staff, and individuals who perceive the world differently can only be resolved by masking individual subjectivities, perhaps with traditional culture.

Arguably the most important contribution of *A Page of Madness* is its formal exploration of how film can represent perception. Writers like Satō and Ranpo had written about the capacity for cinema to represent psychological states, hallucinations, dreams, and illusion. *A Page of Madness* was an important experiment in how to show subjective perception on screens. It also attempted to depict the lived experience of patients troubled by abnormal mental states, projecting the problem of representing abnormal subjective perception onto the mentally ill. While the film could be critiqued for reducing the experience of madness to odd repeated gestures or becoming fixated on a single memory, it is generally sympathetic to patients and their families. Like the psychologists studying neurasthenia, writers and filmmakers found that experience of abnormal mental states pointed to new and better techniques for understanding and representing subjectivity and perception.

Both the burgeoning field of psychology and the established literary world placed *hentai*, in both the study and representation of abnormal mental states, at the center of understanding modernity. Popular psychologists wrote magazine articles telling readers who suffered from neurasthenia and similar problems that their condition allowed humanity to progress forward and could lead to better understanding of the human mind - indeed, their neuroses confirmed their modernity. At the same time, writers and filmmakers found abnormal psychology a useful perspective for understanding subjectivity, questioning the truth of visual perception while also pointing to film as a new medium for representing psychological experiences. Educated, urban men worried

about the mental effects of modern life and how to represent those effects in fiction and on film; and in doing so, uncovered a compensatory value in the seemingly inescapable madness of modern life.

Chapter 04

The Colonial Grotesque: Modernity, Politics, and the “Savage” Other

In 1931, *Chūō Kōron* (*The Central Review*) published a special section entitled “*Neo Barbarizumu*” (Neo-Barbarism) containing short essays by a number of leading authors on the condition of modern Japanese culture. The first essay was by Yokomitsu Riichi, one of the founders of the *Shinkankakuha* (New Sensationalist School) who was as noteworthy for his critical essays on the state of art in modern society as his novels. He contended that barbarism will reach fruition in the same moment that modernity is fully realized. Yokomitsu’s “neo-barbarism” is a return to the romantic or spiritual, a force that overcomes the rationalization of modernity. It is not so much new as it is a return to old, primal forces that defy analysis and scientific understanding and add necessary vitality to culture.³¹⁰ Yokomitsu’s view of the primitive was echoed by the prevalence in *ero-guro* magazines for ethnographic articles and photo essays alongside images of modern technology or dance reviews.

The surprising juxtaposition of the primitive and the modern was not unique to Japanese *ero-guro* magazines but is similar to the content of Surrealist journals from

³¹⁰ Yokomitsu Riich, “Neo barbarizumu to wa,” *Chūō Kōron*, November 1931, 244-245; reprinted in Shimamura Tero, *Ero guro nansensu* (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2005), 612-613.

the same years. James Clifford has argued that this “ethnographic surrealism” is a “modernist,” rather than “modern,” stance that sees both problem and opportunity in the fragmentation and recombination of culture; reality is contested, subverted, and transgressed through binary oppositions, such as “modern” and “primitive.”³¹¹ Thus, discourses of the primitive could serve to criticize modern culture and restore a sense of vitality to modern life. Nevertheless, the political context was not the same for French surrealists and Japanese *ero-guro* writers and editors. For all the Surrealists’ efforts to discredit culturally charged categories such as “civilized” or “savage,” France’s status as “civilized” was never truly in question; on the other hand, Japan had renegotiated its unequal treaties with the Western powers a mere thirty years earlier and was rarely treated as a political or cultural equal.

Ero-guro discourses surrounding the categories of “civilized” and “savage,” “modern” and “primitive” operated on multiple levels. As Yokomitsu’s essay proposes, the “primitive” added vitality to culture, and in the case of *ero-guro* travelogues, the vicarious pleasure of encountering the “savage” other. Politically, framing Japanese culture as civilized and other cultures, such as those of the South Pacific, as savage served as a powerful, yet unstated, justification for imperial conquests while drawing equivalences between Japanese and Western culture under the category of “civilized”. In particular, scholarly and popular discourses on cannibalism shifted China from the category of “civilized” that it had historically occupied in Japan to “savage” and worked in tandem with political arguments for Japanese intervention in Manchuria.

³¹¹ James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 4 (October 1981): 539.

Photomontages contrasting signifiers of modernity like revue dancers with ethnographic images of “savage” cultures demonstrated visually the need for a “primitive” Other in order to understand one’s own culture as modern. All of these discursive turns worked to contain anxieties over Japan’s position in the global political order, justifying imperial conquests and asserting that Japanese culture was indeed modern.

The Japanese Empire in the Taisho Period

By the start of the Taisho period, the borders of the Japanese Empire already extended from Taiwan to Korea. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Tokugawa government seized control of Hokkaido, then the province of Ezo, from the Matsumae daimyo in response to illicit Ainu and Japanese trade with Russia. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Ainu became subject to Meiji initiatives encouraging assimilation and modernization under the framework first of Confucian “benevolence,” then colonial “civilization.” The Hokkaido Development Agency, active from 1872-1882, attempted to force the Ainu to adopt Japanese names and learn the Japanese language, abandon traditional hunting practices for farming, end facial tattooing by women, and earring wearing by men. The success of the Meiji government at forcing the Ainu to assimilate into Japanese society and extract resources from the island would become a model for later colonial efforts.³¹² Similarly, the Ryūkyū Islands had been invaded by the domain of Satsuma in 1609 and was thus indirectly subject to

³¹² Brett L. Walker, *A Concise History of Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 202-205.

Tokugawa control; however, the islanders also paid tribute to the Qing emperor to maintain trade relations with China. In 1879, the Meiji government forced the last King, Shō Tai, to abdicate and reorganized the islands as Okinawa Prefecture.³¹³ At the same time, almost immediately after the Meiji government was established, its leaders turned to the question of Korea. It was clear to the Meiji statesmen, from their experience negotiating treaties with the Western powers as well as observing the effects of Western interventions into China and Korea, that Japan could either begin colonizing other parts of Asia or become a colony of the West. Their first concern was whether Korea would be dominated by the failing Chinese Qing dynasty, a Western power, or Japan. The struggle with the Qing over Korea led to the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, which the Japanese army and navy won within the year. Japanese negotiators hoped to win land and indemnity payments from the Chinese, but due to the intervention of Germany, Russia, and France, was limited to influence over Korea, an indemnity payment, and the island of Taiwan.

When the Qing ceded Taiwan to Japan, there was not a single Japanese soldier on the island. The Japanese government would spend the next two decades fighting a war for control of the island that would cost more lives than the Sino-Japanese War. Initially, Japanese forces formed an alliance with the Austronesian aborigines of the mountainous interior against remaining Chinese guerilla fighters - this was seen as a way to tame the savages as well as establish military control of the island. Once the Chinese guerillas were defeated, the colonial government began laying siege to the

³¹³ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan: Nation, Culture, Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998), Chapter 2, EBSCOHost Ebooks.

aborigines in the mountains. Between 1909 and 1914, the colonial government led by General Sakuma Samata announced a five year plan to end the resistance of the Northern tribes. The offensive was based on constantly expanding outwards heavily defended borders around aboriginal territory, comprised of periodic guard posts, electric fences, and a two-hundred meter wide strip of land mines. The military also used aircraft and warships to bombard villages. In the end, over ten thousand Ataiyal aborigines were killed and resistance to Japanese rule largely ended.³¹⁴

Meanwhile, Japan continued to exert political and economic influence over Korea. Japanese businessmen and landlords looked to profit from lending and, in some cases, outright fraud, under the protection of Japanese consulates.³¹⁵ However, Russia refused to abandon its business and imperial interests in Korea and Manchuria, and went to war with Japan in 1905. At the Treaty of Portsmouth, Russia recognized Japanese claims to Korea and agreed to withdraw from Manchuria, but many in Japan were angry that Russia escaped paying reparations or indemnities. Korea formally became a Japanese protectorate, and in 1910, the Korean Prime Minister was forced to sign an annexation agreement. Unlike Taiwan, which was imagined as a remnant of a savage and prehistoric past, commentators assumed that Korea would quickly assimilate into Japanese society. Historians, ethnographers, and intellectuals had been promoting two theories of Korean and Japanese unity since the 1890s: one theory proposed that the royal family of the ancient Korean kingdom of Silla was the same

³¹⁴ Robert Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 39-42.

³¹⁵ Mark Driscoll, *Absolute Erotic, Absolute Grotesque: The Living, Dead, and Undead in Japan's Imperialism, 1895-1945* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 101-103.

family as the Japanese imperial family, making Korea part of the national polity, and the other theory claimed that Japanese and Koreans were all one race and should thus be united as one nation.³¹⁶ Katsura Tarō, former Governor-General of Taiwan and Prime Minister, and Gotō Shinpei, who was director of civilian affairs in Taiwan and developed much of Japanese colonial economic policy, both encouraged Japanese settlers to emigrate to Korea and Manchuria. They hoped this policy would ease population pressures in the Japanese countryside while also modernizing Korea. However, the actual result of their policies was an increase in Korean tenancy. By 1930, the Japanese governor general was the owner of approximately fifty-five percent of all land in Korea, and a majority of Koreans had no land holdings at all.³¹⁷ Korea was politically and economically important to Japan, but because of the ideologies promoting unity between the Korean and Japanese peoples and erasing national difference, Korea was conspicuously absent from much of the popular discourse surrounding Japan's colonies - unlike Taiwan with its "savage" highlands, Korea was envisioned as a natural part of Japan's empire.

China, particularly Manchuria, became increasingly important for Japanese business and political policy. In 1906, the Japanese government established the South Manchuria Railway Company. Modeled on the British East India Company, the SMRC was headed by Gotō Shinpei and had a mandate to develop economic assets along the railway's path. While the Great Powers in Europe fought the First World War, Japanese

³¹⁶ Eiji Oguma, *A Genealogy of 'Japanese' Self-images*, trans. by David Askew (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002), 65-91.

³¹⁷ Driscoll, 105-109.

trade with China soared from ¥591 million in 1914 to ¥2 billion in 1918.³¹⁸ The Paris Peace Conference was viewed as an opportunity by both countries for a more equal footing with the Western powers, but these hopes were soon disappointed. Japan received Germany's colonial holdings in China and the Pacific as a reward for siding with the allies, but was unable to have racial equality included in the League of Nations charter. The Chinese delegation refused to sign the treaty because it conferred Germany's colonial holdings in China on Japan; many Chinese students and intellectuals joined the May Fourth Movement, protesting both the Treaty of Versailles along with the "Twenty-one Demands" that the Japanese government had delivered to China in 1915, insisting on greater political and economic rights over China. Nevertheless, even as many business and political elites advocated for and enacted greater control over China and Manchuria, many Japanese writers were sympathetic to the plight of Chinese writers and intellectuals throughout the 1920s

Japanese colonial ideology was influenced by Western ideology, adopting and adapting what seemed most useful for Japanese interests.. Meiji leaders studied and adapted Western empires and governing structures along with other aspects of political modernity. They used the same techniques against China and Korea that Western powers had adopted to deprive Japan of sovereign rights. In addition, writers often mimicked the tropes and ideologies of Western colonial literature and political discourses. However, the Japanese empire differed from Western empires in that both colonizer and colonized were Asian. Japanese intellectuals struggled within a global

³¹⁸ Walker, 218-221.

cultural hierarchy where they were considered superior to other Asians but inferior to white Europeans and Americans. Japanese colonizers justified their position by presenting Japan as more civilized than other Asian countries and discovering uncivilized and savage others in the colonies. At the same time, they also promoted themselves as leaders of pan-Asian solidarity against Western powers.³¹⁹ However, as Leo Ching notes, the discourse on cultural affinity between Japan and its colonies, exemplified with phrases like “*dōbun dōshū* (same script, same race) and *isshi dōjin* (impartiality and equal favor)” would not have been needed were the cultural affinity “natural.”³²⁰ Thus Japanese imperial ideology promoted Asian unity, which was strongly contested by colonial subjects, while also asserting Japan should rule Asia because Japan stood at a greater level of civilization. Both contradictory discourses were important in determining Japan’s relation to its colonies; while Korea was often omitted from discourses of savagery because it was assumed to be a civilized part of the Japanese empire, Taiwanese aborigines served as a savage Other in need of Japanese development. Among writers and intellectuals, Asian unity against Western imperialism dominated the late 1910s and early 1920s, particularly in relation to China. But by the late 1920s and early 1930s, this was replaced with an emphasis on the binary relationship between Japanese civilization and savage others, which would come to include China alongside Taiwan and the South Seas.

³¹⁹ Tierney, 15-17.

³²⁰ Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming “Japanese”: Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 26.

Colonial Travel Literature

Travel writing played an important role in shaping Japanese impressions of China and other parts of Asia in the 1910s and 1920s as well as mediating anxieties over both Western and Japanese imperialism. Joshua Fogel argues that for those who wrote about their travels in China between the middle of the Meiji period and World War II, “understanding China” was a recurrent theme. Travelogues often began by asserting that the China of the past was sharply different from the China of the present, and presented readers with a clear reason for privileging the firsthand accounts of the traveler. The China of the past encompassed everything from the writings of Confucius and Mencius, the Daoists, and many of the poets, writers, and historical figures of later eras who were widely known among educated Japanese.³²¹ The China of the present, however, was figured as a site of grotesque poverty, crippling misrule, and dangerous revolutionaries. Famous writers - poets, playwrights, authors, and critics - were the largest group to travel from Japan to China during the prewar period. These writers were often funded by a newspaper with the expectation of producing an exclusive travelogue afterwards, or invited by members of the Japanese business community or government. They often traveled to Korea and Taiwan as well. However, unlike journalists and politicians, writers were less inclined to make pronouncements about Chinese national character or offer policy suggestions and more likely to sympathize with the problems facing China.³²² Rather, writers often emphasized pan-Asian

³²¹ Joshua Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), xiv-xv.

³²² *Ibid.*, 250-275.

solidarity in the face of Western imperialism along with sympathy for the political concerns of their Chinese peers.

For example, Tanizaki Junichiro's travel account emphasizes the shared struggle of Chinese and Japanese writers to become influential and widely read outside of their home countries. He first travelled to China in 1918, hoping to meet young writers and intellectuals but lacked the stature and connections to do so. He returned to China in January and February of 1926, and published an account of his travels entitled "Shanghai Friends" in *Kaizō* later that year. On his second trip, he introduced himself to Uchiyama Kanzō, the proprietor of the famous Uchiyama Shoten bookstore in Shanghai. Uchiyama was widely respected among Chinese intellectuals and ran the best Japanese language bookstore outside of Manchuria. Between Uchiyama's connections and Tanizaki's literary reputation, he was able to meet many important Chinese writers including Guo Moruo, Tian Han, Ouyang Yuqian, Tang Han, and Xie Liuyi.³²³

One of the remarkable events in "Shanghai Friends" is a party held for Tanizaki by the Winter Endurance Society, a group of writers based in Shanghai, at the New Youth Motion Picture Company outside the city. The party brought together nearly one hundred people, a veritable Who's Who list of Shanghai figures, including not only writers but also film stars, martial artists, musicians, and socialites. As the guest of honor, Tanizaki addressed the crowd: "A new artistic movement is thriving in China today. A novelist from your neighboring land, I could never have imagined holding such

³²³ Ibid., 261-262.

an enormous gathering. I truly thank you.”³²⁴ Undoubtedly, both Tanizaki and his Chinese hosts were interested in improving their own international reputations through their public association; at the same time, his account emphasizes their shared experiences as young writers participating in their respective countries’ new literary movements. For example, after spending New Year’s Eve with Tian and Ouyang, he wrote to Tian: “You probably had a similar experience when you were a student in Japan. It is really pleasant to be welcomed into a happy family and treated warmly in a strange country. Not only that, but the custom of having all the people in the family stay up on New Year’s Eve, a convention already vanishing in Japan, is still kept in your country.”³²⁵ It is clear throughout the account that Tanizaki genuinely appreciated the hospitality he was shown in China, and he frequently calls attention to the educated, cosmopolitan backgrounds of the Chinese writers he befriended. Overall, Tanizaki left his readers with the impression that Chinese writers were not so different from their Japanese counterparts.

Though Tanizaki’s account emphasized shared ambitions between members of the Chinese and Japanese literary scenes, he was nevertheless forced to acknowledge the different political challenges both countries faced. Tian Han and Guo Moruo, whom Tanizaki considered among the most talented in the Chinese literary scene, had studied at Japanese universities and translated Japanese literature into Chinese in addition to producing original works of their own.³²⁶ As writers, the three men could easily

³²⁴ Tanizaki Junichirō, “Shanghai Friends,” trans. by Paul D. Scott, *Chinese Studies in History* 30 (1997): 82-88.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

commiserate over low payment rates for manuscript pages and discuss the colleagues' whose work they admired the most. However, when they began drinking Shaoxing wine at a hotel and conversation turned to politics, they had markedly different perspectives. Tian and Guo complained that when China's industrial structure was reorganized, the only people to benefit financially were foreigners, while the Chinese had to contend with higher and higher prices. Tanizaki responded that this was a worldwide phenomenon: "most of the foreign capital is American or English, and this exists all over the world. I am not an expert on economics but Japan is also dominated by Anglo-Saxon money, is it not?" Guo immediately pointed out that Japan had maintained its independence and could profit from foreign capital, while foreigners felt free to ignore Chinese interests and customs. Tanizaki, citing Japanese experts on China, claimed that this was a matter of national character: "The Chinese people are outstanding at economics but have no ability in politics . . . Even if their sovereignty has been snatched away by foreigners, they do not care." But Guo argued that while China had been able to assimilate foreign invaders in the past, China's subjugation by Western imperialists was wholly different and could not be solved in the same ways as China had dealt with other invasions in the past. In the end, Tanizaki found himself sympathizing with their position.³²⁷ The exchange exemplifies the different political situations facing both countries; while Japan had gained independence from Western political and economic pressures, China still had to contend with unequal treaties and trade agreements with the Western powers. Though Tanizaki represented his Chinese peers as engaging in a shared struggle for

³²⁷ Ibid., 80-82.

inclusion and respect in the international literary community, he eventually acknowledged the additional struggles facing China, and was persuaded that China's problems were rooted in global politics more than national character.

Like Tanizaki, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke was commissioned by a newspaper, the *Ōsaka mainichi shinbun*, to travel to China and write about his visit for their readers in March 1921. He visited a number of locations beginning with Shanghai, passing through the Yangzi river valley and Luoyang, and ending in Beijing. One of the editors introduced his column by emphasizing the contrast between the China of the past, which influenced Japanese literature and culture, and the China of the present: "China is of great interest as one of the mysteries of the world. Old China has toppled to its side like a dead tree, and New China is attempting to stretch forth from it like tender shoots of grass."³²⁸ Akutagawa was already well-known for his historical stories based on ancient and medieval Chinese and Japanese literature, and his editors surely expected his account to explicate the division between an ancient and literary image of China and the state of China in 1921 after political and economic upheaval. Unfortunately, his tour of China was marked by illness; he spent the first three weeks in a Shanghai hospital with pleurisy and never completely recovered.³²⁹ His account is marked by ambivalence and the difficulty of reconciling the China he knew from poetry and literature with the China of 1921. For example, he wrote of the crowd in front of a temple: "From such a crowd it should not be too difficult to find heroes of this sort. However, no matter how I looked, I'd never find a Du Fu, a Yue Fei, a Wang Yangming,

³²⁸ William C. Hedberg, "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's uncanny travels in Republican-era China," *Japan Forum* 29 (2017): 236-237.

³²⁹ Joshua A. Fogel, "Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and China," *Chinese Studies in History* 30 (1997): 6-9.

or a Zhuge Liang. In other words, present-day China is not the kind of China you find in poetry and essays. It is the kind of obscene, cruel, greedy China that you find in [modern] fiction.”³³⁰ Throughout his travels, Akutagawa repeatedly looked for the China he knew from poetry and literature. Even as he observed famous temples and buildings fallen into ruin, and ever-present beggars, he sought to reconcile historical and contemporary China. As William Hedberg has argued, the strength of Akutagawa’s work is that it calls attention to the impossibility of describing China “objectively” by constantly reminding the reader of the influence of history and aesthetics in shaping the author’s subjective narrative.³³¹ Indeed, Akutagawa’s struggle to represent contemporary China appealed to Chinese readers as well. In 1926, Gai Zun published a partial translation of his work in *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (*Novel monthly*), seeing it as a corrective to other works by Japanese that heaped ridicule on his country while also appreciating Akutagawa’s appraisal of China’s economic and political struggles.³³² Familiar as Akutagawa was with Chinese literature, he could not visit China without looking for the country he knew from poems, plays, and novels. Nevertheless, he too struggled to reconcile the China of the past with the China of the present.

After he returned to Japan, Akutagawa published a deeply anti-colonial version of the traditional Momotaro story in 1924. Momotaro was born from a peach and raised by an elderly couple in the mountains. After he grew up, he left to conquer the island of the Oni, or demons; along the way, he gained the help of a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant

³³⁰ Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, “Travels in China,” trans. by Joshua A. Fogel, *Chinese Studies in History* 30 (1997): 19. Hedberg translates the last word as “novel” rather than “fiction;” in either case, it is clear that Akutagawa is contrasting the China of poetry and literature with that of contemporary writers.

³³¹ Hedberg, 249-254.

³³² Fogel, 9.

by sharing his dumplings with them. Within this framework, authors had used the story to comment on a variety of political issues, and by the time Akutagawa was writing, Momotaro had become something of an imperialist hero. In 1907, Nitobe Inazo gave a famous lecture on the Momotaro story, where he used Momotaro's conquest of the demon island to justify both the Japanese conquest of Taiwan and the establishment of further colonies in the South Seas.³³³ Nitobe had served in Gotō Shinpei's administration in Taiwan in 1901, and became the first chair of colonial studies at Tokyo Imperial University in 1908 through Gotō's help. From this position, he standardized the curriculum for a systematic and comparative study of colonialism around the globe, even coining a new word for colony, *shin ryōdo*. Meaning "new territory of the state," he argued that this word encapsulated the elements of people, land, and "political relationship to the motherland."³³⁴ His version of Momotaro placed the story at the heart of expansionist, imperial discourse in Japan. Momotaro's conquest of Demon Island came to represent a Japanese version of manifest destiny, an allegory for the natural right of a more civilized nation to rule a less developed colony.³³⁵ Akutagawa himself claimed that the idea for his version of Momotaro came from a conversation with Zhang Binglin in Shanghai, when Zhang said "The Japanese person I despise the most is Momotaro, the conqueror of Demon Island. And I can't help but harbor the same sense of antipathy for the Japanese who so adore him."³³⁶ Even outside of Japan, Momotaro had come to represent Japanese imperial expansion.

³³³ Tierney, 121-24.

³³⁴ Kate McDonald, *Placing Empire: Travel and the Social Imagination in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 13.

³³⁵ Tierney, 125-129

³³⁶ Quoted in Hedberg, 253.

In Akutagawa's version, Momotaro and his retainers are motivated by greed and selfishness to attack the Oni's island: Momotaro and the old couple are lazy, the dog wants to bite things, the monkey only cares about treasure, and the pheasant has deluded notions of loyalty that everyone else mocks. The Oni, however, live in a peaceful tropical paradise, unlike the famous violent demons of Japanese legend. When Momotaro and his companions reach the island, the dog bites young demons to death, the pheasant pecks Oni children to death, and the monkey rapes Oni daughters before strangling them. After the Oni chieftain is forced to surrender, he asked Momotaro why he subjugated their island. Momotaro simply replies: "Because from the start, I wanted to subjugate the island of the Oni, so I used millet dumplings to hire my retainers - Well? If you still say you don't understand, I'll kill all you rascals." Yet although Momotaro is victorious, he does not enjoy a happy life. The Oni children he took as hostages become adults and take violent revenge, setting Momotaro's house on fire, killing the monkey in his place, and creating bombs out of palm fruits in order to liberate their island. The narrator concludes that it would have been much happier if the *yatagarasu* bird had never uncovered such a genius sleeping in a fruit.³³⁷ Akutagawa's allegory refuses any of the common justifications for colonial adventures, depicting Momotaro and his companions as selfish, violent, and cruel; there is no just motivation for attacking the peaceful Oni. Moreover, Momotaro clearly represents Japanese imperialism towards other nations, not that of the West towards China or Japan, because Momotaro's peach was discovered by the *yatagarasu*. In the *Nihon Shoki*, an

³³⁷ Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, "Momotarō," *Aozora Bunka*, accessed December 23, 2018, https://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000879/files/100_15253.html. The story was originally published in the July 1924 special issue of *Sandei Mainichi*.

early eighth-century text supporting the imperial line's divine right to rule Japan, the *yatagarasu* appears as a guide from the gods for Emperor Jimmu as he conquers what would become the Yamato state. Emperor Jimmu was revered at the height of Japanese imperialism; the 2,600th anniversary of his enthronement was widely commemorated in 1940 and centered the unbroken, imperial line at the heart of the ideology of the Japanese state.³³⁸ Thus, the *yatagarasu* clearly signals that Akutagawa intended to skewer Japanese imperial ambitions in his allegory. Moreover, as Robert Tierney argues, the dog, monkey, and pheasant can be read as war-mongering militarists, greedy capitalists, and deluded intellectuals, respectively - a set of caricatures of the primary advocates and beneficiaries of Japan's colonial adventures.³³⁹ Though Akutagawa's travel accounts avoided taking an overt political stance, his later works show he was clearly attuned to the politics of the intellectuals he met in China and appreciated the problems of imperial expansion.

A close friend of Tanizaki and Akutagawa, Satō Haruo, traveled to China in 1920, 1927, and 1938. He had extensive training in Chinese literature and published a number of translations into Japanese, among them Lu Xun's *The True Story of A Q*. Thanks to Tanizaki's introduction to Uchiyama, Satō was able to meet many Chinese writers and intellectuals in 1927, including Tian Han and Yu Dafu.³⁴⁰ But unlike Tanizaki and Akutagawa, Satō had also traveled to Taiwan and South China on his 1920 journey and, significantly, spent much of his time with Mori Ushinosuke (1877-1926), a

³³⁸ See Kenneth J. Ruoff, *Imperial Japan at Its Zenith: The Wartime Celebration of the Empire's 2,600th Anniversary* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

³³⁹ Tierney, 140.

³⁴⁰ Fogel, 265-266.

Japanese ethnographer and botanist. Mori initially came to Taiwan as a Chinese language interpreter for the Japanese army during the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. He remained in Taiwan to study the aboriginal tribes, producing handbooks of aboriginal languages, scholarly articles, and a taxonomy of tribes that was adopted by the colonial state in 1913. Nevertheless, Mori was extremely frustrated by Japanese state policy towards the aboriginal tribes, arguing that the civilizing efforts of the state were destroying their cultures. He valorized the pure culture that existed before the Japanese occupation, and remarked on the similarities between savage and civilized people. Robert Tierney characterizes Mori's work as "imperial nostalgia," a mode in which colonizers express nostalgia and longing for forms of life they intentionally destroyed. Imperial nostalgia helps agents like Mori avoid feeling complicit and profess innocence at the cultural destruction resulting from colonial policy. Satō spent most of his time in Taiwan in Mori's company and the two corresponded at least until 1926, when Satō hosted Mori in Tokyo.³⁴¹ Three years after he traveled to Taiwan, he wrote a short story, "Demon Bird," which drew on his experiences in Taiwan as well as the tropes of ethnographic writing to critique Japanese colonial policy there. In addition, "Demon Bird" is not only concerned with the experiences of colonized Taiwanese and imperial tourists, but also the relationship between the categories of "civilized" and "savage." While Satō has a strong humanistic empathy for the aborigines and an appreciation for their culture, he has also been criticized for leaving the colonized outside of discourse; that is, the aborigines are objects of observation and study, and

³⁴¹ Tierney, 86-90.

cannot speak for themselves.³⁴² Nevertheless, the story is an important critique of colonial policy and commentary on the categories of “civilized” and “savage.”

The first half of “Demon Bird” is presented as an ethnography describing “a superstitious belief held by certain barbarians.” Without directly specifying a place or tribe, the narrator explains that these barbarians believe in a demon bird (*hafune*) that causes the death of anyone who sees it. Some people are demon bird manipulators (*mahafune*), and in order to protect the tribe, the barbarians kill anyone suspected of being a demon bird manipulator along with their family. In the second half of the the story, the narrator relates the most recent account of a demon bird manipulator that he heard from two native porters when he visited a land which is unnamed in the text but is clearly meant to be understood as Taiwan. The place is an enormous island with deep jungles; the Eastern half is dominated by steep, nearly impassable mountains inhabited by savage tribes. The porters’ story concerned Pira, the daughter of Satsuan, and her younger brother Kōre. Pira had turned eighteen, but refused to tattoo herself and marry. She was also acting strangely for no discernable reason. Two years earlier, the troops of a civilized country massacred eighty men of a neighboring village. Rumors spread that Pira had been following the army, and a few villagers believed Pira had been raped by one of the soldiers, and did not want to be tattooed because she would have to make a full account of what happened in accordance with the village’s custom. Most of the villagers agreed that Pira was a *mahafune* and they set Satsuan’s hut on fire, killing the family as they escaped. Somehow Pira and Kōre survived. They returned to the

³⁴² Tierney, 108-110.

village, and Pira confessed that the first rumor - that she had been raped by one of the soldiers - was what had happened. But she and her brother were banished from the village for causing trouble, and both died within a few years.³⁴³ On the surface, the narrator uses the porter's story to criticize Japanese colonial policy - not only was the Japanese army the root cause of the tragedy that befell Pira and her family, other details such as the massacre of another village and the narrator's need to travel with guards indicate the violence of colonial policy and its destructive impact on aboriginal tribes.

In addition to serving as a critique of colonial policy, the introduction to "Demon Bird" calls into question the binary relationship assumed to exist between barbarians and civilized people. Satō begins his story with the following introduction:

"The story I am about to tell you is about a superstitious belief held by certain barbarians.

Naturally, barbarians believe in superstitions. On this point, they are not the slightest bit different from civilized people. If I were to venture a comparison, I would say that the superstitions of the civilized are complicated and overly cerebral, while those of the barbarians are more natural and beautiful.

Perhaps some people think that only barbarians believe in superstitions while the civilized do nothing of the sort, but they are completely off the mark. Just as civilized people discover many superstitions in the manners and customs of barbarians, barbarians would probably find an equal number of superstitions in the social constraints that govern life in civilized society."³⁴⁴

Satō's commentary here anticipates Yokomitsu Riichi's assertion that modern people - the "civilized" - need a "savage" counterpart in order to be modern, though such binary distinctions are not as great as they are often presented. It is also similar to

³⁴³ Satō Haruo, "Demon Bird," trans. by Robert Tierney in *Reading Colonial Japan: Text, Context, and Critique*, ed. by Helen J. S. Lee and Michelle Mason (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 111-123.

³⁴⁴ Satō, 111.

observations laid out by Sigmund Freud in *Totem and Taboo*, with which Satō was likely familiar. Freud makes a similar claim to Satō's, noting that "'superstition,' like 'anxiety,' 'dreams,' and 'demons,' is one of the preliminaries of psychology that have been dissipated by psychoanalytic investigation." In other words, psychoanalytic techniques can explain what lies beneath both the superstitions of "savages" as well as the anxieties and neuroses of people living under modernity. Both "savage" and "civilized" people have irrational beliefs which can be understood through psychoanalysis, although such beliefs may appear different on the surface.³⁴⁵ Indeed, the "savage's" beliefs about the *mahafune* are exactly how Freud describes taboo in primitive societies. Freud writes that the violation of a taboo makes the offender taboo, and that the violation of a taboo can be transmitted between people - exactly as manipulating a demon bird makes a "savage" and their family taboo. Moreover, he observes that a taboo is a contagion that must be excised from the community.³⁴⁶ Given Satō's interest in ethnography, he may well have been familiar with Freud's work, or the ethnographic works Freud used as sources. In any case, the introduction of "Demon Bird" primes the reader to understand the story as an allegory for the superstitions of "civilized" people, who are not so different from the "savage," as much as it is about the treatment of aboriginal Taiwanese.

As a result, the main thrust of Satō's observation is that civilized people are equally violent in eliminating people who violate the rules of a given society. Thus, "Demon Bird" can simultaneously critique both Japanese treatment of Taiwanese as

³⁴⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. by A.A. Brill (New York: Moffat, Yard and company, 1918), 161-163.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 34-38

well as the way society treats people who do appropriately conform to expectations. He describes “a certain civilized country” who treated the natives of another country “as beasts” while suppressing and imprisoning anyone with “slightly different views,” and then comments “the civilized resemble barbarians insofar as they arbitrarily deem evil everything they do not understand and strive to exterminate people who wear incomprehensible facial expressions. There are many among us civilized folk who are *identified as mahafune*. However I am not here to talk about civilized people.”³⁴⁷ Satō’s allegory here is particularly effective; by not specifically naming which groups in the civilized nation are *mahafune*, the reader can interpret any number of groups persecuted by the Japanese state for politically dangerous speech as the *mahafune* of the civilized country. He also calls attention to the need to control dangerous and contaminating elements shared by both the civilized and the savage. And given the damage already done by civilized armies, the savage society certainly has more justification for violently attacking what they consider dangerous.

On the other hand, the weakness of allegory is that it does not name a specific target of censure - Satō does not identify the *mahafune* of the civilized nation. Nevertheless, there is strong circumstantial evidence that Satō intended “Demon Bird” to be interpreted as a critique of the colonial violence in the home country as well as in the colonies. On September 1, 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake, measuring 7.9 on the Richter Scale, struck Tokyo and the surrounding area. At least 150,000 people were killed or injured, mostly as a result of widespread fires following the earthquake. In the

³⁴⁷ Satō, 116.

aftermath, a second tragedy occurred - rumors began to spread that Koreans were setting fires, poisoning wells, and starting riots. An estimated 6,000 Korean residents were killed by police, military, and vigilante groups. Although “Demon Bird” does not directly refer to the murders of Korean residents after the earthquake, there is compelling evidence that Satō intended to comment on the violence towards Koreans that resulted from the rumors. At the time of the earthquake, Satō was staying in a hotel in Omori and returned to the city to look for his brother and other friends in the following days. He completed “Demon Bird” by September 20 and it was published in the October issue of *Chūō Kōron* (*The Central Review*), focusing on the aftermath of the earthquake. All direct references to the murder of Koreans in the October issue were censored with *fuseiji*, or hidden characters. While “Demon Bird” appeared in the fiction section of the magazine, its allegorical form may have been the only way to comment on the attacks on Koreans within the magazine. Moreover, one critic has suggested that the three proper names in the story form a cipher tying the narrative to Korea. According to an Ataiyal dictionary, *sasan* (Satsusan) means morning, *qoleh* (Kōre) means fish, and *pila* (Pira) means silver. In Taisho Japan, Korea was written with the characters 朝鮮 (*chōsen*); 朝 means morning and the second character can be separated into the radicals 魚, meaning fish, and 羊, meaning sheep. The Ataiyal word for sheep is *shiri*, but *shiri* is also the Japanese word for buttocks, so it is understandable why Satō may have settled for a broken cypher.³⁴⁸ The context surrounding the publication of “Demon Bird,” as well as the overall theme of the text,

³⁴⁸ Tierney, 95-106.

suggest that the story should be read as a critique of the colonial violence occurring in Japan's capital as well as in Taiwan.

The connection between “Demon Bird” and the violence against Koreans after the Great Kanto Earthquake also points out the limits of discourse in the Taisho period. Not only were writers constrained by their own position of relative privilege in the Japanese Empire, they also had to negotiate official government censorship in addition to self-censorship by magazine editors.³⁴⁹ It should not be a surprise that Tanizaki's sympathy towards Chinese writers also expressed pan-Asian sentiments, nor that Akutagawa and Satō critiqued Japanese imperialism through allegories that did not specifically name administrators or policies. Nevertheless, all three authors' works point towards a degree of empathy towards those bearing the brunt of both Western and Japanese imperialism among intellectuals as well as criticism of imperial policies pursued by the Japanese state.

Ethnographic Surrealism

In using ethnographic narrative style to criticize modern culture, Satō was working along similar lines to many artists and writers in the European avant-garde. In the climate of social rupture surrounding the first world war, Dada artists appropriated objects, images, poems, and songs from Africa and the South Seas in order to provoke their audience and attack Western bourgeois values. For example, during Dadaist

³⁴⁹ See chapter 5 for further discussion.

“evenings” at Cafe Voltaire around 1916, they wore painted “Negro” masks of paper, cardboard, and string modeled on African originals. By the mid-1920s, Dada had been superseded by the more organized Surrealist movement. The Surrealists had a similar attitude towards ethnographic artifacts from non-Western peoples, collecting and revering African and Oceanic objects for their ethnographic and artistic values. Photographs of artifacts, as well as the artifacts themselves, were removed from their cultural context and emptied of meaning, becoming a blank slate for the projection of Surrealist values. They believed that non-Western objects could be used to restore magical or spiritual forces that no longer existed in Western culture.³⁵⁰ In addition to removing objects and images from their original indigenous contexts for their own ideological purposes, the Surrealists often grouped “primitive” peoples with children and the mad; both practices implicitly justified colonialism.³⁵¹ Nevertheless, André Breton, the leader of the main French group, adopted an explicitly anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist position: “Surrealism is allied with people of colour, first because it has sided with them against all forms of imperialism and white brigandage . . . and second because of the profound affinities between Surrealism and primitive thought.”³⁵² Since James Clifford’s seminal paper, “On Ethnographic Surrealism,” which called attention to the importance of ethnography in Surrealism, there has been much scholarly debate about the extent to which the movement lived up to Breton’s stated anti-racist and anti-colonial ideals.

³⁵⁰ Julia Kelley, “The Ethnographic Turn,” in *A Companion to Dada and Surrealism*, ed. by David Hopkins (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 404-415.

³⁵¹ Louise Tythacott, *Surrealism and the Exotic* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 55-60.

³⁵² Quoted in Tythacott, i.

A key site of ethnographic Surrealism was the journal *Documents* (1929-1930), which was edited by Georges Bataille and featured the work of Surrealists who had been exiled from Breton's central group. The subtitle of the magazine - "Archéologie, Beaux Arts, Ethnographie, Variétés" - demonstrates the importance of ethnography in radically questioning social norms and the allure of the exotic; many issues included articles on ethnography alongside European art history and works by contemporary artists like Pablo Picasso.³⁵³ Linda Steer analyzes two photographs that appeared on the same page in the September 1929 issue of *Documents*, a still of a revue scene from the film *Broadway Melody* and a photograph of black students at the Bacouya School, Bourail, New Caledonia, to argue that the politics of the Surrealists were generally anti-racist and anti-colonial. An article two pages later by Michael Leiris titled "Civilization" outlines the precariousness of civilization and the primitiveness at its core. The juxtaposition of the two photographs with the context of Leiris' article could suggest that the children are made more "civilized" by colonial rule, criticize the idea of civilization altogether, show the "primitiveness" inside modern revue shows, or call attention to the savagery of civilizing colonialism. The ambiguity of appropriated ethnographic photographs positioned the Surrealists as outside the structures of French culture and allowed critique of national values.³⁵⁴ The magazine's position on East Asian cultures was less clear. Louise Tythacott observes that the Surrealists did not devote the same amount of attention to China or Japan as they did to Oceania, Mexico, or Africa, because they believed their culture was too "civilized" to contribute to an

³⁵³ Clifford, 548.

³⁵⁴ Linda M. Steer, "Photographic Appropriation, Ethnography, and the Surrealist Other," *The Comparatist* 32 (2008): 63+.

understanding of primitive desire.³⁵⁵ But it is perhaps more accurate to say that China and Japan held ambiguous positions between “primitive” and “civilized” that defied the Surrealists’ propensity for binary contradiction. In an article on Chinese Bronzes from *Documents*, Paul Pelliot comments: “To be more precise, and without intending to cast any aspersions on the magnificent earlizations [sic] of Chinese art, this is how the question stands: are the greater parts of the conceptions of Chinese art original, or are they derivative?”³⁵⁶ This comment at once denies Chinese art the originality and vitality the Surrealists valued in “primitive” art while also refusing it the importance in art history granted to ancient Greek or Sumerian works in the same issue. The Surrealist movement lacked a coherent position on China and Japan because they were neither aesthetically “civilized” nor “primitive,” not part of the Western great civilizations but also not full political colonies of the West.

What is remarkable is the formal similarity between *Documents* in France and *Grotesque* and *Criminal Science* in Japan.³⁵⁷ All three magazines published multiple series of found photographs and illustrations with no context beyond a brief caption, inviting the reader to draw new meanings from the juxtaposition of images. Both *Documents* and *ero-guro* magazines included articles on Western witchcraft and magic. For example, *Documents* contained a long article by Michel Leiris about the tarot and

³⁵⁵ Tythacott, 6.

³⁵⁶ Paul Pelliot, “A few remarks on ‘Siberian’ and Chinese art concerning the bronzes of the David-Weill Collection,” *Documents* 1 (April 1929), 92-95, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb34421975n/date>, translation from the English supplement.

³⁵⁷ As far as I know, there was no direct communication between French Surrealist groups and *ero-guro* magazine editors in Japan, and must assume that the similar content was the product of similar interests.

alchemical symbols in Grillat de Givry's recent book on occult magic.³⁵⁸ Similarly, the first issue of *Grotesque* featured an article on "The Magic of Love" by Sakai Kiyoshi, which included topics ranging from Western paganism and alchemy to black masses and sabbats; the opening graphic section in the second issue included examples of French tarot cards contrasted with charts used in traditional Japanese fortune telling.³⁵⁹ *Criminal Science* included a two-part series on producing ghosts, giving a history of the spiritualism craze and an explanation of the tricks mediums used to convince their audiences that ghosts were present.³⁶⁰ *Ero-guro* magazines also contained articles on Freudian psychoanalysis and "abnormal" sexual desire that would not be out of place in Surrealist journals.

However, *Grotesque* and *Criminal Science* contained very different discourses on ethnography and the "primitive." Rather than using ethnography to challenge social norms, *ero-guro* discourses emphasized a vicarious tourism of the strange and unusual, called *ryōki*. Satō Haruo gave the existing four-kanji idiom *ryōki tani* (獵奇耽異, "hunting the weird and indulging the different") the English gloss "curiosity hunting," a phrase that became popular thereafter.³⁶¹ The search for the strange and unusual could take place in exotic foreign locations like the dance halls of Paris or the sideshows of Asakusa. Commentators at the time suggested that the interest in *ryōki* was a way of

³⁵⁸ Michel Leiris, "A propos du 'Musée des sorciers,'" *Documents* 1 (May 1929), 109-116, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb34421975n/date>.

³⁵⁹ Sakai Kiyoshi, "Ai no majutsu," *Gurotesuku*, October 1928, 1-35; *Gurotesuku*, December 1928; both reprinted in *Gurotesuku 1*, ed. by Shimamura Teru, (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2016).

³⁶⁰ Abe Tokuzō, "Yūrei seizō - kijutsukai sanpo - (ichi)," *Hanzai kagaku* (March 1931), 69-75; Abe Tokuzō, "Yūrei seizō - kijutsukai sanpo - (ni)," *Hanzai kagaku* (April 1931), 99-110; reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 5-6* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008).

³⁶¹ Jeffrey Angles, "Seeking the Strange: 'Ryōki' and the Navigation of Normality in Interwar Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 63 (Spring 2008): 103.

compensating for the enervation of modern life: “when the nerves of modern people no longer allow them to be content with the hackneyed and the commonplace, they begin to crave the stimulation afforded by the abnormal and the strange.”³⁶² *Ryōki* writing also included accounts of the customs of primitive cultures. Jeffrey Angles observes that semi-ethnographic tales of foreign customs usually did not include areas like the Ryukyu Islands, Hokkaido, or Korea, but included places like Manchuria and China which were still outside the Japanese empire and could still be considered “strange.”³⁶³ While *ryōki* may have begun as simple curiosity hunting, over the course of the 1920s and early 1930s ethnographic accounts contained increasingly unsubtle pro-imperial subtexts: “savage” or “primitive” peoples ought to be forcibly “civilized.” Rather than questioning the validity of “civilized” and “savage” binaries, as earlier writers like Satō had done, *ero-guro* discourses alleviated anxieties that Japan was not considered civilized by positioning Japan as the ideal agent of civilization in China and Manchuria.

Cannibalism: A Practice Grotesque, Primitive, and Chinese

While many writers and intellectuals professed concern for the effects of imperialism on China and Taiwan in the Taisho period, by the early Showa, *ero-guro* magazines began emphasizing the weird, grotesque, and barbaric aspects of their history and culture and thereby offering tacit support to pro-imperialist policies. One telling example is the newfound emphasis on cannibalism, particularly mentions of

³⁶² Quoted in Angles, 118.

³⁶³ Angles, 112.

cannibalism in Chinese historical chronicles. Research articles on cannibalism strongly appealed to grotesque sensibilities - indeed, anthropophagy is the epitome of grotesque gastronomy - while also establishing Japan's place at the top of a sort of international food pyramid of imperial authority and cultural development. Whether a culture practiced cannibalism, and what kind of cannibalism was practiced, offered a strong justification of Japanese colonialism. Accounts of Chinese cannibalism implied that Japanese intervention in China and Manchuria would lead to better government and cultural improvement. Furthermore, descriptions of historical anthropophagy in China allowed authors to bridge the divide between Old China, with its historical influence on Japanese culture, and New China, a site of political and economic disorder by arguing that Old China was irredeemably tainted with cannibal practices, and therefore not as civilized as had been once believed. In short, discourses surrounding cannibalism helped move China from the category of civilized to savage in the minds of intellectuals.

However, it is important to briefly consider the history of cannibal studies as well as the history of writing about cannibals. Anthropophagy has a long tradition of appearing in exotic travelogues, beginning with Herodotus' Mesogetae and Scythians. As Europeans ventured further and further, cannibals frequently appeared in distant and exotic places. Marco Polo described a tribe of cannibals in China, Christopher Columbus wrote of the Carib tribe from which the word cannibalism is derived, and both Hans Staden and Jean de Léry recounted tales of cannibalism practiced by the Tupinamba of Brazil. Later, explorers and missionaries continued the tradition of including exotic stories of anthropophagy in the Americas, Africa, and Oceania. The

problem is, as anthropologist William Arens argued in his 1979 book, *The Man-Eating Myth*, that most of these stories are poorly substantiated at best. They are typically second-hand accounts from native informants, and rarely include first-hand observation of cannibal practices. In addition to simple mistranslation and misunderstanding, European and American writers often had a strong interest in depicting cannibal cultures as benefiting from Christianity and colonial 'pacification.' Omitting rare instances of survival cannibalism and social deviants, which occur in every culture, the only well substantiated accounts of socially accepted cannibalism are found among the Amazon tribes and Papua New Guinea, and much of the evidence in those cases is problematic as well. Therefore, Arens argues, cannibalism should be viewed as a discourse about a savage other, existing outside civilized norms, rather than as an actual cultural practice.³⁶⁴ As a result, many scholars now emphasize the intellectual history of cannibalism and the cultural role which is played by stories of cannibalism. Indeed, we might usefully define cannibalism as a fear that a savage Other will eat us.³⁶⁵ Japanese articles from the early Showa took accounts by Western anthropologists and missionaries at face value, using existing discourses surrounding cannibalism to position Japan on the same footing as the non-cannibal Western nations, and thereby justify Japan's imperial ambitions.

³⁶⁴ William Arens, "Rethinking Anthropophagy," in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39-62.

³⁶⁵ For further discussion of cannibalism as a fear of the savage other, see the introduction of Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-Eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) as well as Peter Hulme, "Introduction: The Cannibal Scene," in *Cannibalism and the Colonial World*.

In 1932, *Hanzai Kagaku (Criminal Science)* published “A Report on Cannibal Customs,” a two-part article by folklorist Ōto Tokihiko describing cannibal customs from around the world. Though he does not offer his own first-hand observations, he cites an extensive range of sources from books and articles by Western and Japanese anthropologists and archaeologists as well as classical Chinese histories. It is an account at once sensational and academic. Ōto introduces his article with the following statements: “The fact must be recognized here that cannibal customs have occurred from ancient times to the present. Yet even so, it cannot be generally concluded that there exist many peoples with that custom, or that civilized peoples may have had that practice at one time.”³⁶⁶ In other words, though cannibalism has always existed, there are also some civilized societies with no general practice of cannibalism - Japan included. Broadly speaking, Ōto’s work gives historical and contemporary accounts of cannibalism from around the world, arranged according to whether human flesh is a common food source, cannibalism as part of a religious ritual or type of folk magic, medicinal cannibalism, and cannibalism in times of extreme famine. What is more interesting than Ōto’s often fragmentary and disjointed examples is the way cannibalism is used to classify cultures as civilized or savage depending on the quality and quantity of cannibalism practiced.

Most of Ōto’s account describes the conventional subjects of scientific accounts of cannibalism: Australian aborigines, African tribal societies, and the people of various Polynesian islands. However, while he denies that the Ainu of Hokkaido or the people

³⁶⁶Ōto Tokihiko, “Shokujin fūzoku kō,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, March 1932, 199; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*, (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008).

of the Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands practice cannibalism, Taiwan occupies a more ambiguous position. Both Hokkaido and the Ryukyu Islands had already been conceptualized as a natural part of Japan since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; however, Taiwan remained a site of aboriginal savagery in Japanese mass culture. For example, the practice of headhunting, that is, killing an enemy and then displaying their head as a trophy, had long served as a symbolic representation of the savagery of the Taiwanese aborigines, regardless of whether the practice continued or not. Indeed, there were some accounts of “replica” skull cases circulating in the 1930s after the practice had by all accounts ended.³⁶⁷ Ōto began his discussion of Taiwan by explaining that “Taiwanese aborigines immediately call to mind headhunting,” then listed a number of competing reports about whether or not those tribes were cannibals. Notably, one of the sources that cannot discount the existence of tribes with cannibal customs is an official government survey report of the island. In September 1898, the colonial government established the Temporary Land Survey Bureau, which produced an exhaustive study of Taiwan requiring seven years, over five million yen, and covered 1,647,374 parcels of land.³⁶⁸ The survey was designed to clarify the topography of the colony, ascertain land ownership and thereby increase the effectiveness of land taxation, and lay the groundwork for further colonial development, particularly sugar factories. One of the most important effects of the survey, according to one colonial official, was to “promote security and peace” by making it impossible for bandits and

³⁶⁷ See Ching 157; Tierney, 48-62.

³⁶⁸ Ruiping Ye, *The Colonisation and Settlement of Taiwan, 1684-1945* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), Chapter 6, Ebook.

guerillas to hide from Japanese authorities.³⁶⁹ By using government reports to leave open the possibility of cannibal customs on Taiwan, Ōto reinforced the colonial ideology that the island needed Japanese rule - not only did some tribes practice headhunting, there might be some that engaged in anthropophagy. If the government could not even determine whether or not the “wild tribespeople” (生蕃) practiced cannibalism, then the logical conclusion was that more study and control by the Japanese authorities was required.

In contrast, Ōto spent a number of pages at the end of his two-part article establishing the comparative absence of cannibalism in Japan. There are few folktales describing man-eating demons, but since they are not human, it is not cannibalism. Moreover, civilized, European countries have folktales about cannibalism; Scotland had the outlaw Sawney Bean, who engaged in murder, incest, and cannibalism.³⁷⁰ Western archaeologists presented a greater challenge to Ōto’s argument. E. S. Morse, who famously excavated the Omori shell mounds in the late 1870s, was convinced that the human bones he found had been broken, boiled, and eaten. Though his ideas were influential, Ōto cited a number of works by Japanese archaeologists who disagreed with Morse, and concluded that there are no credible accounts of cannibalism in Japan and few scholars still believed Morse’s claims.³⁷¹ In short, Japan’s lack of documented cannibalism put Japanese civilization on par with civilized Western nations, where cannibalism only appeared in the realm of monsters or deep prehistory.

³⁶⁹ Binghui Liao and Dewei Wang, *Taiwan under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945: History, Culture, Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 47-49.

³⁷⁰ Ōto, 205.

³⁷¹ Ōto Tokihiko, “Shokujin fūzoku kō,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1932, 68-70.

Cannibalism in China, by contrast, presented unique challenges and opportunities for Ōto and other Japanese writers. China could not simply be presented as a primitive or uncivilized culture, like Polynesian or African tribes, or Taiwanese aborigines since most educated Japanese acknowledged China's ancient and ongoing influence on Japanese culture. At the same time, there were many accounts of cannibalism in China since antiquity, appearing in a number of Chinese historical chronicles.³⁷² Thus, Japanese writers were able to use accounts of cannibalism, removed from their original contexts, to characterize China as a nation of extreme villainy, bizarre superstitions, and incompetent government.

Early awareness of Chinese cannibalism came from Japanese academic research on China's history. Throughout the Meiji period, Japanese scholars had accepted the premise of Western, objectivist history, which believed in a scientific and rational study of the past rooted in Enlightenment principles, but challenged the superior position of the West. The term *tōyō*, often translated as Oriental, indicated the non-Western part of the world and *tōyōshi*, or Oriental history, emphasized an equivalence between modern Japan and the West. At the same time, *tōyōshi* argued for Japan's superior development over Asia in general and China in particular.³⁷³

³⁷² Unfortunately, there does not appear to be a comprehensive study of the intellectual uses of cannibalism in China comparable to Cătălin Avramescu's masterful study of anthropophagy in Western thought, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), EBSCO eBook. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine whether mentions of cannibalism are intended as descriptive tropes or actual events. For example, many Chinese chronicles of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE) describe survival cannibalism during war with the set phrase "people exchanging one another's children for food" and do not elaborate further. It is possible then that this is intended to convey the extreme deprivation rather than actual cannibalism. See Key Ray Chong, *Cannibalism in China* (Wakefield, New Hampshire: Longwood Academic, 1990), 46-47.

³⁷³ Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering Pasts Into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 4-14.

Kuwabara Jitsuzō had trained under Ludwig Reiss at the Imperial University in Tokyo (later the University of Tokyo) before taking a position as a professor of *tōyōshi* at the University of Kyoto.³⁷⁴ His scholarly essay, “The Custom of Cannibalism Among the Chinese People,” became the source for much of the writing on Chinese anthropophagy that would appear in *ero-guro* magazines and popular books on China. He began his study with the ninth-century Islamic work known as the *Akhbār al-Sin wa-l-Hind* which describing a journey through China and India; the account claims that in Tang (618-907 CE) China, officials who did not submit to the emperor were beheaded and eaten.³⁷⁵ After this gruesome introduction, Kuwabara asserts: “The Chinese, in spite of the of their ancient culture which should be praised by the world, from ancient times to the present, throughout three thousand years, has continually had the barbaric custom of cannibalism.”³⁷⁶ The rest of his essay then enumerates examples of cannibalism from various Chinese historical chronicles, which would serve as the basis for research into Chinese anthropophagy as late as 1990.³⁷⁷ The problem with this type of analysis is that examples are given without context. For example, the author of an official dynastic history might well find it politically useful to depict the leaders of the previous dynasty as immoral through practices like cannibalism, whether it actually happened or was a useful rumor. But without any source criticism except a citation from the relevant chronicle, examples of Chinese cannibalism are made to appear factually true and

³⁷⁴ Tanaka, 192. Kuwabara has also been criticized for ignoring evidence contrary to his theories; for example, claiming that Pu Shougeng was a Muslim of Arab descent despite Pu being a Chinese surname of long use. See Stephen G. Haw, “The *History of a Loyal Heart*: A Late Ming Forgery,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, vol. 2 (2015): 323-324.

³⁷⁵ Kuwabara Jitsuzō, “Shinajin kan ni okeru shokunin niku no fushu,” *Tōyō gaku* 14 (1924): 6.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷⁷ Key Rey Chong cites Kuwabara’s work extensively.

generally representative of Chinese culture. Kuwabara's essay is significant for establishing the methodology of listing examples of cannibalism without analyzing the role of cannibalism in the work as a whole, demonstrating the influence of scholarly discourses of *tōyōshi* on popular authors, and giving scholarly credibility to an image of China as country that has always (and presumably always will) practice cannibalism. Anthropophagy thus provided the ideal means of demonstrating Japan's cultural superiority over China, despite both cultures' long, shared history.

Seven years later, Nagae Yoshimasa began his book, *Gurotesuku Shina* (*Grotesque China*), with a twenty-eight page discussion of cannibal customs.³⁷⁸ Nagae was a newspaper reporter from Tokyo who authored many books on Manchuria, Korea, and China during the early Showa Period. By this time, the press had become less critical of official government policy and largely supported Japan's imperial ambitions. Travelogues were expected to contain not only observations of China, but also to offer guidance towards future Sino-Japanese relations. Nagae's account was typical in that it saw the troubled state of China in 1931 as representative of all of China's history and culture. Few accounts offered historical context for the chaos of revolutionary political movements, warlordism, and widespread opium addiction.³⁷⁹ Thus, China's problems at present became the natural result of a fundamentally deviant culture.

Like many other Japanese writers on China, Nagae begins his book with an acknowledgment of the wisdom of Confucius while simultaneously criticizing the present

³⁷⁸ Nagae's surname 長永 is romanized "Osanaga" on Worldcat but as "Nagae" on <http://webcatplus.nii.ac.jp>. I am using Nagae here since Webcatplus includes many of his other books and articles on Korea and Manchuria from the early Showa period, and is the reading used in Joshua Fogel's book.

³⁷⁹ Fogel, 226-230

state of Chinese culture. He uses two examples from Confucian tradition to characterize the people of China as both licentious and gluttonous. In the first, Confucius admonishes Duke Rei of the kingdom of Wei for flirting with a woman while riding in the same carriage as him with the statement “you will not find a person whose love of virtue is like their love of sex.” In the second anecdote, which took place after the sage’s death, Duke Ai of Lu uses the body of one of Confucius’s disciples as food, since the disciple had been gluttonous during his lifetime. Nagaie concludes: “Confucius had given up hope concerning lust, and his disciple Shiro was completely betrayed and devoured by gluttony. The Chinese people carelessly betray Confucius. The sages who followed Confucius did not bother to preach anything. The way of the Five Constants remains as empty characters, and the people advance furiously on the twin paths of lust and gluttony.”³⁸⁰ Nagaie’s choice of anecdotes from Confucian tradition allow him to express admiration for Confucian teaching while criticizing contemporary Chinese for falling to live up to Confucian standards. And, the implicit suggestion is that other cultures influenced by Confucius - such as the Japanese - may better exhibit correct morals and virtuous behavior.

Similarly, Nagaie emphasized the chaos and disorder at the end of the Ming Dynasty as a cause of and occasion for cannibalism. In 1644, Li Zicheng and his rebel troops captured the Ming capital, Beijing, and the last Ming emperor, Chongzhen, committed suicide. Then, less than one year later, Manchu armies seized the capital and established the Qing dynasty. He writes: “at the end of the Ming, year after year

³⁸⁰ Nagaie Yoshimasa, *Gurotesuku Shina* (Tokyo: Banrikaku shobō, 1930), 1-3.

piracy was rampant and the people greatly suffered from famine; everywhere there was cannibalism.” People were afraid to leave their houses, lest they be killed and eaten, children who left their houses were killed for food, and some merchants openly sold human flesh, though they claimed it was “rice meat.”³⁸¹ The implicit argument is that the Chinese people often suffered from misrule and turned to cannibalism and therefore would benefit from outside rule.

Historical incidents of survival cannibalism in China appear in Ōto’s work as well. He is most sympathetic to cannibalism for survival, noting that “if we consider the practice with common sense, the most common occasion of cannibalism is famine. Facing death by starvation, they abandon their usual sensibility and choose to eat . . . Or when defending a castle to the last and surrounded by enemies . . . or shipwrecked on an uninhabited island, their choice is no different.” Despite viewing cannibalism in extreme circumstances as more understandable, he then claims that this type of cannibalism is uniquely common to China, that there are too many examples to list, and that during a bad year, human flesh is as commonly sold as the meat of animals.³⁸² Serious famine leading to anthropophagy is well-documented in Chinese imperial chronicles, and one scholar lists thirty-eight occurrences during the Ming dynasty alone.

³⁸³ Like Nagae, Ōto cites a famous anecdote from the period of warfare at the transition between dynasties. At the end of the Han dynasty (206 BCE - 220 CE), Yuan Shao demanded the surrender of Cao Hong. Cao Hong chose to resist to the end, and to

³⁸¹ Ibid., 15-16.

³⁸² Ōto Tokihiko, “Shokujin fūzoku kō,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1932, 66-67.

³⁸³ Chong, 62. Many of the listed accounts are found in more than one chronicle.

help his men killed his mistress and served her as food for his soldiers.³⁸⁴ On the other hand, Ōto presents survival cannibalism as rare in Japanese history. Even at a famous siege during Toyotomi Hideoyoshi's invasion of Korea (1592-1598 CE), the Japanese killed and ate horses but not human flesh, and if an example must be found, there is perhaps one during Kublai Khan's first invasion of Japan (1274 CE). Moreover, he writes that accounts of cannibalism during famine are rare in Japan, and when they do occur, use the same "showy language" and are perhaps only rumors.³⁸⁵ Ōto's insistence that Japan has no clear record of anthropophagy even during famines and sieges is not insignificant. In eighteenth and nineteenth century European discourses, population became something managed by political science and strongly influenced by the type of government. Though hunger does not directly lead to cannibalism, Thomas Robert Malthus characterized primitive societies as wandering in a perpetual state of hunger, eating things like spiders, lizards, and tree bark. Similarly, Adam Smith wrote that vice and hunger were the consequences of a simple economy without private property, wealth, or division of labor.³⁸⁶ An excess of hunger was the result of a badly managed economy and government; when the vice of cannibalism was present, bad governance was made even more clear. Ōto's observation that China suffered from somewhat understandable survival cannibalism while Japan never had such incidents is not only a commentary on both nations' degree of civilization but also an argument for

³⁸⁴ Ōto, 67; see also Chong, 67. Chong notes that because of Cai Hong's "unusual gesture" his men were moved to tears at his compassion and did not desert the castle.

³⁸⁵ Ōto, 67.

³⁸⁶ Avramescu, Chapter 7.

the superiority of Japanese governance. Left unsaid is the implication that China could only benefit from Japanese rule.

Another relatively well-substantiated type of Chinese cannibalism was the use of human flesh as medical treatment. Usually one person would offer their flesh, such as a piece of thigh, to an older family member who was ill. Most scholars of Chinese history today interpret descriptions of voluntary cannibalism as part of larger debates over the appropriate limits and expressions of filial piety towards one's elders. Moreover, the practice appears to have occurred in fact as well as in literature; Key Ray Chong counted 766 cases of filial anthropophagy in Chinese dynastic and historical chronicles. Interestingly, though men sometimes cut their bodies for medicine, most accounts describe women sacrificing their flesh for their mothers-in-law.³⁸⁷ Tina Lu calls this practice of *gegu*, literally the slicing of a limb, "a central component of filial behavior, mentioned far more often than more quotidian expressions of devotion," in Late Imperial Chinese literature. Filial piety required self-sacrifice for one's parents, and cannibalism foregrounded the problem of self-sacrifice. At what point did self-sacrifice turn destructive - when the child is consumed to serve the needs of the parent - and thus become unfilial in preventing future generations? Indeed, both the Yongzheng emperor and his son the Qianlong emperor debated whether to award posthumous honors for filial behavior to people who died as a result of practicing *gegu*.³⁸⁸ Filial cannibalism was markedly different from other forms of cannibalism, in that one party voluntarily allowed their flesh to be consumed by another and was usually not fatal. It was an

³⁸⁷ Chong, 93-103, 164.

³⁸⁸ Tina Lu, *Accidental Incest, Filial Cannibalism, & Other Peculiar Encounters in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 149-154.

expression of extreme filial piety that called attention in literature and in practice to the extent children, especially women, were expected to sacrifice themselves.

Some stories of historical cannibalism repeated by Japanese authors clearly referenced *gegu* and Chinese debates over loyalty. For example, Ōto repeats the story of a general whose troops are under siege and starving. The general's loyal concubine offers to be fed as soup to the starving troops, and her sacrifice inspires the entire army. The account originally appeared in the third century history, *The Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi*), during General Cao Hong's desperate defense of Chang-an. This story was later made into a famous play, *Shuangzhong ji* (Two great loyalists), by fifteenth century playwright Yao Maoliang. Both Katherine Carlitz and Tina Lu have argued that the play makes an analogy between the concubine's loyalty to the general and the individual's loyalty to the state; it is the concubine's self-sacrifice for her husband that makes the army's sacrifice for the emperor possible.³⁸⁹ However, in most Japanese accounts, the practice of voluntarily offering one's body as food or medicine is removed from broader debates over loyalty or filial piety and is dismissed as superstition and presented as further evidence of China's backwards culture. Ōto cites Kuwabara's article in tracing the use of human flesh to cure illness to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), writing "ever since it was stated that human flesh will cure an illness, children would decide to cut their thigh of their own volition or their parent's illness. When the Chinese disposition first developed the custom, having a tendency to proceed to either end of good or evil, the society of Confucius all together began cutting the flesh

³⁸⁹ Lu, 12; Katherine N. Carlitz, "Family, Society, and Tradition in *Jin Ping Mei*," *Modern China* 10 (1984): 395.

of their thighs for their parents' and elders' illnesses.” Ōto characterizes the practice as a superstition and writes that later generations prohibited it. Though he mentions a few cases of using human flesh as medicine in Japan, he quickly dismisses them as a result of Chinese superstitions, then mentions dismissively rumors he heard as a child that people would kidnap children and sell them to the Chinese for medicine.³⁹⁰ In China, examples of voluntary cannibalism were extreme cases in broader discourses concerning the appropriate limits of individual loyalty and filial piety. But for Japanese scholars in the early 1930s, they were reframed as backwards superstitions and xenophobic urban legends.

By the early 1930s, cannibalism had become a common trope in *ero-guro* articles about China. Nakano Kōkan's brief article from 1931, “China's Mysterious Customs,” aptly summarizes the Japanese consensus about Chinese cannibalism. Nakano worked as a journalist and scholar in Beijing during the 1910s and 1920s, often mentoring other Japanese interested in Chinese religion and culture.³⁹¹ He even acted as a guide for Akutagawa when he toured China in 1921, taking him to sites outside the usual tourist routes.³⁹² Nakano's article begins: “China is an *ero-guro* country. China's customs, with a five thousand year history, are a cloth woven from *ero* and *guro* threads.” Erotic topics included cabaret girls and women addicted to opium, and the final grotesque section was simply titled “People who eat bizarre things and cannibals.”

³⁹⁰ Ōto, 67-68.

³⁹¹ Lincoln Li, *The Chinese Factor in Modern Japanese Thought: The Case of Tachibana Shiraki, 1881-1945* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1996), 10.

³⁹² Akutagawa, “Travels in China,” 44.

After describing a number of unusual dishes made from exotic ingredients like the throat of a young deer or snake and cat meat cooked together, the last paragraph concludes:

“The most outrageous example is the eating of ‘human flesh.’ The ‘cannibals’ of China have existed since very ancient times, as the official histories make clear. In the case of human flesh being used as food, we cannot help but be surprised that it was openly used as medicine. In accordance with exhaustive research into ‘human cuisine,’ this custom is actually practiced, even among the Chinese people of today.”³⁹³

Cannibalism had shifted from a historical curiosity supported by examples from Chinese chronicles to a well-known example of grotesque gastronomic practices in China.

Nakano’s long residence in China lent credibility to his characterization of Chinese food as exotic and bizarre. At the same time, his characterization was undoubtedly influenced by longstanding Western discourses of Chinese cuisine as exotic and disgusting. For example, in nineteenth century accounts by American missionaries in China and in accounts of Chinese immigrants in the American West, Chinese food was said to contain unpalatable meats like dog, cat, and rat.³⁹⁴ Similarly, one European philosopher analyzing the sensation of disgust in the 1920s looked to Chinese cuisine for examples of disgusting foods and described the Chinese preference for completely rotten eggs as “a passion for esoteric refinement on the part of an extraordinarily overcultivated civilization.”³⁹⁵ But negative images of Chinese cuisine were not generally held in Japan in the Meiji and Taisho periods. Meiji elites conceptualized an increasingly international Japanese cuisine along a

³⁹³ Nakano Kōkan, “Shina no kikai fūzoku,” *Hentai fūzoku gahō*, July 1931, 38-43; reprinted in *Ero guro Nansensu*, edited by Shimamura Teru (Tokyo: Yumani shobō, 2005), 298-303.

³⁹⁴ Yong Chen, “Food, Race, and Ethnicity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Food History*, ed. by Jeffrey M. Pilcher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 433-434.

³⁹⁵ Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust*, ed. by Barry Smith and Carolyn Korsmeyer (Chicago: Open Court, 2004), 60. Kolnai’s treatise was originally written in 1927 and published in 1929.

“Japanese-Western-Chinese” tripod, and Chinese cuisine was widely eaten in Japan during the 1920s and 1930s.³⁹⁶ Indeed, Tanizaki described a vegetarian dinner he was served in Shanghai as “exquisitely prepared” and praised the skill of the chefs in using a variety of preparations to affect the smell and taste of mundane ingredients like bean curd, rice, and wheat flour.³⁹⁷ Nakano’s characterization of Chinese cuisine as fundamentally grotesque and disgusting stood in sharp contrast to earlier, complimentary assessments by Japanese writers.

The shift between Tanizaki’s praise for a fine vegetarian dinner he was served in China and Nakano’s account of “people who eat bizarre things and cannibals” is an apt summary of the shift in discourse surrounding China over the course of the 1920s among Japanese intellectuals. At first, many writers who traveled to China sponsored by newspapers or Japanese business interests expressed sympathy for the political and economic problems facing China. By the end of the decade, popular magazines and books about China emphasized grotesque practices like cannibalism and presented those practices as a common and integral part of Chinese culture. The fact that examples of cannibalism could be found in classical Chinese chronicles and literary sources allowed Japanese writers to bridge the divide between Old China, which developed Confucian philosophy and influenced Japanese culture, and New China, a place of disorder in need of foreign - namely Japanese - rule. Cannibalism played an important role in shifting China and Chinese culture from the category of “civilized” to the category of “savage” among Japanese intellectuals, while also satisfying the

³⁹⁶ Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power, and National Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), 138-140.

³⁹⁷ Tanizaki, 78.

appetite for grotesque spectacle of magazine readers. At the same time, discourses of cannibalism placed Japanese culture firmly in the category of “civilized” along with the West while offering strikingly grotesque accounts of other, more “savage” cultures.

The Eroticism of the Primitive and Grotesque

Ero-guro magazines frequently included graphic sections juxtaposing images of “savage” and “civilized” people, buildings, and artworks. First, categories such as “savage” and “civilized” can only exist in relation to each other; modern singers can thus appear more modern when presented in contrast with images of “primitive” cultures. Second, both types of images are of bodies that are acceptable for readers’ consumption. The bodies of female performers have already been commodified by their profession, while ethnographic photographs were part of a global practice of viewing the bodies of racialized others as entertaining spectacles. These entertainments presented a racial ideology that denied the contemporaneity of indigenous people with ethnographers and their audiences. Fatimah Tobing Rony has characterized the consumption of images of a racialized, primitive Other with the term “fascinating cannibalism.” Her term calls attention to the way the consumers of ethnographic images digest the “savage” bodies on display with a mixture of fascination and horror.³⁹⁸ Finally, the images associate desire and erotic attraction with “primitive” urges the Surrealists identified as a necessary, vitalizing component of modern culture.

³⁹⁸ Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and the Ethnographic Spectacle*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 9-10.



ニューギニアの喧嘩人
敵蕃の頭を見て
微笑じ

三二五



Figure 13: *Hentai Fūzoku Gahō*, July 1931, 4-8; reprinted in Shimamura Tero, *Ero guro nansensu*, (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2005), 315-319.

The July 1931 issue of *Hentai fūzoku gahō* (*Abnormal Customs Graphic*), includes many illustrative examples of the pairing of ethnographic images and showgirls. One five page sequence begins with a man looking at a human head on a stick; the caption reads “New Guinea Cannibal: Looking at an enemy head and smiling.” This is followed by an image of Melanesian dance masks, then an image of Melanesian dancers, and a two page spread of topless showgirls from Paris, with a caption reading “Borgia Poison: A Genuine Paris Grand Revue, flowers blooming in a contest of beauty, Casino de Paris.” The first image of the New Guinea man demonstrates the role of context and captions in determining reader interpretations of an image. The reader only believes the man is a cannibal because the caption says that he is a cannibal, and by the same token, the reader believes that he smiling or gloating over a dead enemy - not, perhaps, engaging in a different type of memorial for a member of his tribe - because the caption says it is so. Indeed, William Arens notes that in what is largely considered the best documentary evidence of cannibalism in Papua New Guinea, images that are presented or implied to document cannibalism actually show people eating wild boar or other animals.³⁹⁹ At the same time, the presence of the head would likely call to mind comparisons with the discourses surrounding headhunting among Taiwanese aborigines for Japanese readers. Having primed readers with associations surrounding ethnographic images of savage societies, the second picture of Melanesian dance takes on sinister tones. At face value, two men appear to be chasing, or perhaps capturing, a third dancer in a large mask in a forest. It appears from the black lines surrounding the

³⁹⁹ Arens, 59-61.

legs of the figures that the dancers have been cut out and superimposed on the forest, and it is impossible to conjecture about the meaning of the dance. But, given the context - or rather, lack of context - it is easy to interpret the image as some kind of ritual chase leading to cannibalism. The reader's interpretation of Paris Revue dancers is also shaped by the caption and relationship with earlier images. The title "Borgia Poison" gives a sense of grotesque horror to the photo spread, alluding to legends of the evil Lucretia Borgia poisoning her enemies. Moreover, the order of the photographs creates an association with a dance presented as "savage," as well as cannibalism, with the eroticism of the French dancers, in addition to the murderous undertones from the association with Borgia. Thus, the sequence of photographs contrasts grotesque horror of cannibalism and murder with the eroticism of dance and topless women, the modernity of French culture with the "primitive" culture of aboriginal societies, and evoke intense, primitive emotions of desire and disgust.

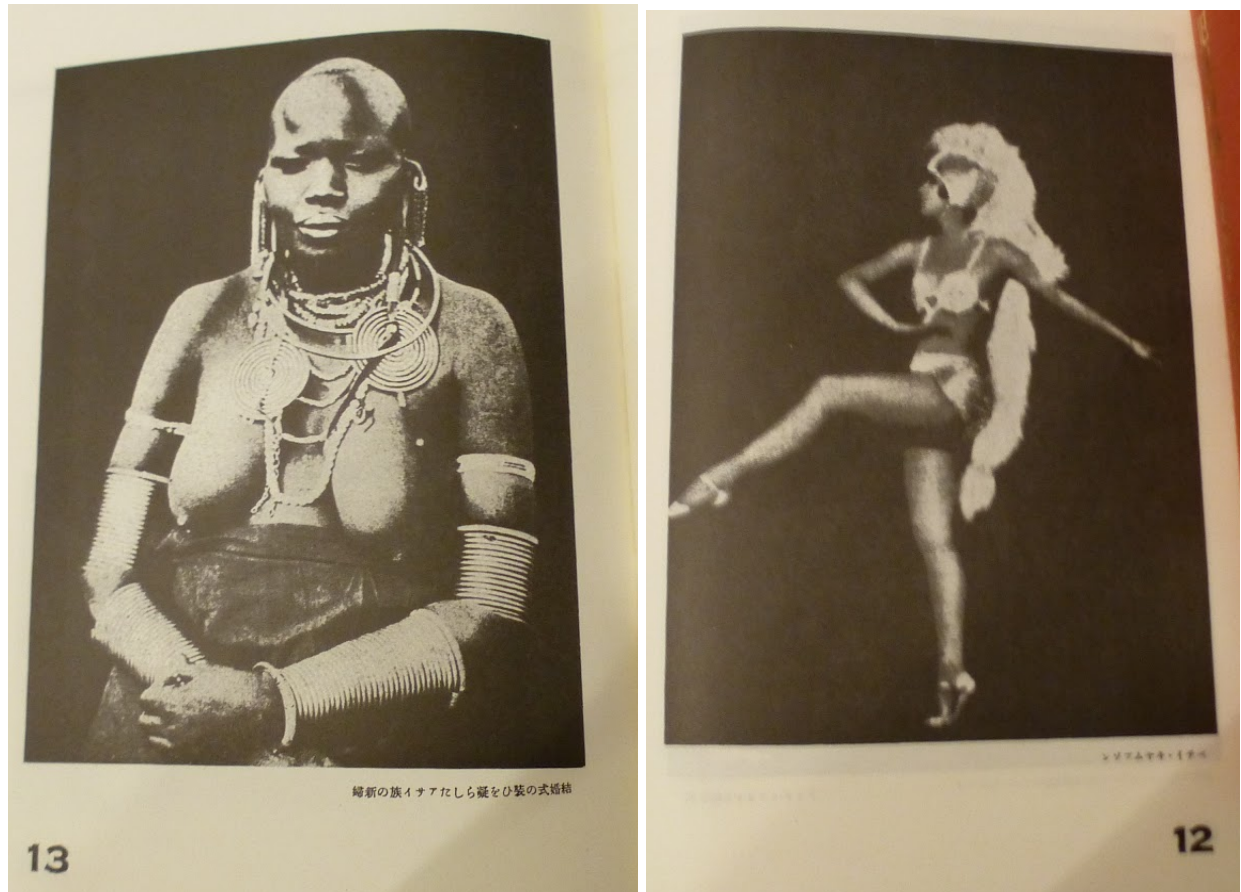


Figure 14: *Hanzai Kagaku*, March 1931, 12-13; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008. Captions read “Betty Compson”, “Asai bride, appearing to wear wedding clothes”

Hanzai Kagaku (*Criminal Science*) published similar sequences of photographs. In the March 1931 major graphic section, a series of images of showgirls is followed by a number of ethnographic images. The two photographs at the point of transition, a promotional image of American actress Betty Compson and an Asai bride, exemplify how photographs are recontextualized by the graphic sections.⁴⁰⁰ Though many of the images of showgirls did not name the subject, some, like Compson, were identified in

⁴⁰⁰ The original caption reads アサイ族; however I have not been able to find an English translation. I suspect it is a misspelling of the Japanese transliteration of Maasai tribe (マサイ族).

the caption. None of the captions of the ethnographic images give the subject's name, and only identify the subject by tribe; it is not surprising the subject is unnamed, since the ethnographic images were only intended to represent a "savage," grotesque type to stand in contrast with modern revue dancers. Both women are offered for the erotic viewing pleasure of the magazine's readers, but while Compson retains her identity and was conscious of the eroticism of her image, the image of the Asai bride is only intended to serve as ethnographic spectacle. Moreover, pairing the images contrasts the eroticism of modernity with the eroticism associated with ethnographic images coded as "savage."



Figure 15: *Hanzai Kagaku*, August 1931, 1-2; reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008. Caption reads “Opium Smoker in China”

Though images of China were not ethnographic or racialized in the same way as images of people from “savage” tribes, they often represented another grotesque counterpoint in *ero-guro* magazines. The graphic section from the August 1931 issue of *Hanzai Kagaku*, entitled “Expressions of the World” opens with a pair of dark-skinned lips in extreme close-up. *Ero-guro* magazines like *Hanzai Kagaku* frequently used images of female body parts to illustrate title or transition pages. This visual trope at

once completes the objectification and commodification of the original subject of the photograph, while also deconstructing and commenting on the relation of the part to the whole. The lips are followed by an image of a Chinese man smoking opium; the images together draw the viewer's attention to the act of smoking opium and the man's lips. *Hanzai Kagaku* included many images of China and Chinese people in other graphic sections, usually emphasizing extreme poverty or supposedly grotesque aspects of Chinese culture, such as foot binding. The August 1931 issue also included articles titled "The Eroticism of Chinese Theater," "Chinese Psychology through Gambling," and "China's Grotesque Cuisine." Grotesque images from China tacitly contributed to magazine readers' perception that China was full of poverty, drugs, and grotesque customs. While not expressly political, these images supported Japanese governance of China by emphasizing deviant customs along with evidence of ineffective political and economic management.

Photographic sections of *ero-guro* magazines reinforced the ideologies of articles on cannibalism and other foreign customs. Emphasizing elements of other cultures that could be presented as exotic, erotic, and grotesque, photo montages contrasted ethnographic images of "primitive" and "savage" societies with images that represented modern culture, particularly revue dancers. Though the montages emphasized global culture, when Japanese subjects were included, it was always as part of the modern - for example, showing Japanese movie theaters in Asakusa in a section on film, or including images of Japanese revues alongside revues on Broadway or in Paris. By the same token, photographs of Chinese subjects had fully shifted to the category of

savage, appearing in sections on global poverty or exotic customs. In *ero-guro* magazines, ethnographic images were not used to criticize modern civilization but to confirm Japanese cultural modernity while tacitly reinforced ideologies justifying Japanese imperial expansionism.

Discourses surrounding the “primitive” and “savage” in *ero-guro* culture sought to alleviate anxiety over Japan’s role in global politics and culture. The division of the “savage” and “civilized” also determined politically what nations were justified in colonizing and “civilizing” others. During the Taisho period, the annexation of Korea was erased from popular understandings of empire by ideologies of historical unity even as Taiwan, and particularly Taiwanese aboriginal tribes, was coded as “savage” and served as a counterpoint to “civilized” Japan. Historically, China was civilized, and educated Japanese were very familiar with Chinese culture and its influence on Japan. In order to justify imperial ambitions in China, cannibalism, along with other Chinese customs that were presented as grotesque, shifted China from the category of “civilized” to the category of “savage.” The popular ethnography of *ero-guro* magazines compensated for fears that Japan might be considered “savage” by the West while also supporting Japanese control of China.

Chapter 05

Political *Nansensu*: Censorship and the Thrill of Forbidden Speech



Figure 16: Cover of November 1928 *Gurotesuku* magazine

The cover of the inaugural October 1928 issue of *Gurotesuku* magazine defies easy interpretation. The image is of a fetus rendered as a pharaoh in the style of Ancient Egyptian tomb art; only six years after the discovery of King Tut's tomb, the world was still in the throes of Egyptomania. It seems like it ought to be offensive, but there is no obvious reason why it should be so. Trendy yet bizarre, the fetus-pharaoh signifies nothing except the magazine's commitment to the uncanny and avant-garde and requires the reader to formulate their own interpretation of it. But this is the point of the fetus-pharaoh; precisely because it is provocative without offering a clear reason for offense, the fetus-pharaoh embodied *Gurotesuku's* opposition to oppressive state censorship through the aesthetics of *nansensu*. The absence of meaning became a primary method of expressing frustration at the impossibility of publishing an explicit critique of political policy.

Censors working for the Japanese Home Ministry banned periodicals and other forms of mass media for both obscenity and sedition. What constituted obscenity was somewhat flexible and open to interpretation while politically dangerous ideas - particularly Marxist ideas - were dealt with harshly. Even as writers, editors, and journalists opposed censorship as unfair in enforcement or unjust in principle, many others were so afraid of the pernicious influence of modern mass culture, leftist propaganda, and right wing violence that the censors were not without support in the general public. Modernists and leftists turned to the aesthetics of *nansensu* as a way of pushing against the limits of what censors delimited as acceptable public discourse; by leaving the meaning of a work in a state of indeterminacy, they could evade charges of

obscenity or sedition. *Gurotesuku*'s fetus-pharaoh, like much of the seemingly random output of *ero-guro* magazines, challenged the boundaries of permissible speech without giving government officials concrete reasons for censorship. Modernist writers and editors found that challenging the boundaries of what was permitted gave a new compensatory energy to politically dangerous and erotically charged works, linking together leftist ideology with sexual explicitness.

Modernism and Censorship

Cultural historians and literary scholars have become increasingly attuned to the important role of censorship in affecting modernist literary and artistic works. Robert Darnton argues that there are two modes in the modern historiography of censorship: a Manichean narrative of freedom of expression versus state authority, and a postmodern view of censorship as one of many constraints that inhibit communication.⁴⁰¹ Rachel Potter emphasizes that legal repression gave obscene words and images a “transgressive energy” that modernists hoped to capture in their work.⁴⁰² Similarly, William Olmstead claims that the stylistic hallmarks of nineteenth century French modernism, exemplified by Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert, are the product of the authors’ struggles with censorship. Baudelaire and Flaubert’s works were the subject of infamous obscenity trials, but Olmstead shows that even before the trials,

⁴⁰¹ Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), Introduction, Overdrive E-Book.

⁴⁰² Rachel Potter, *Obscene Modernism: Literary Censorship and Experiment, 1900-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4-5,

both authors made stylistic decisions intended to demonstrate that they were not encouraging immoral behavior in their readers.⁴⁰³ Indeed, the censors themselves could preserve the very material they were suppressing in state archives, as Jonathan Abel argues was the case in Japan.⁴⁰⁴ Chris Forster argues that trials and debates over obscene literature demonstrate the importance of the “media ecology” in which individual works circulated; obscenity debates were really about how and where specific types of media could and should circulate.⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, Hiromu Nagaharu makes a case for the importance of mass media circulation, specifically popular music, in shaping modern mass culture in Japan. He argues that individual censors became arbiters of the taste and quality of new cultural products, such as popular music.⁴⁰⁶ Historians and literary scholars have become increasingly attuned to the productive effects of censorship systems in shaping media contexts.

However, while Western modernists were primarily concerned with censorship on the grounds of obscenity, Japanese modernists also faced limits on what could be published for political reasons. In France, eighteenth century censors were primarily concerned with webs of protections and clientage surrounding the Bourbon court; the works of Enlightenment writers were less contentious than novels or stories that satirized powerful people.⁴⁰⁷ During the Consulate (1799-1809), about 92% of

⁴⁰³ William Olmstead, *The Censorship Effect: Baudelaire, Flaubert, and the Formation of French Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2

⁴⁰⁴ Jonathan Abel, *Redacted: The Archives of Censorship in Transwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 3-9.

⁴⁰⁵ Chris Forster, *Filthy Material: Modernism and the Media of Obscenity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4-5.

⁴⁰⁶ Hiromu Nagahara, *Tokyo Boogie-Woogie: Japan's Pop Era and Its Discontents* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 5, 73.

⁴⁰⁷ Darnton, Part I: Bourbon France: Privilege and Repression, Overdrive EBook.

ensorship cases involved challenges to political or social authority, but by the Second Empire (1851-1857), 47% of cases involved violations of the moral order.⁴⁰⁸ In the United States, the First Amendment limited restrictions on obscenity and political speech, and as a result, most obscenity trials were at the state level.⁴⁰⁹ One of the few instances of political censorship in the United States was the Espionage Act of 1917, which restricted speech that would “cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States.” The Espionage Act, and its 1918 amendment commonly known as the Sedition Act, were used against strikers and in the Palmer Raids targeting Communist radicals; however the Sedition Act was repealed in 1920.⁴¹⁰ In contrast, Japanese censors were equally concerned with politically and morally dangerous material. As a result, modernists in Japan who wanted to give their work transgressive energy could appropriate discourses of political extremists as well as pornographers.

Censorship in Taisho and Early Showa Japan

Censors at the Home Ministry had a number of administrative and judicial tools to suppress objectionable content both cultural and political. Taisho and early Showa publishers were governed by the 1909 Newspaper Law, which remained in effect until 1945. Home Ministry officials had the ability to levy fines and impose jail after a trial; more importantly, they could seize all copies of a publication without a trial and without

⁴⁰⁸ Olmstead, 17.

⁴⁰⁹ Potter, 18-19.

⁴¹⁰ Frank Caso, *Censorship* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), 24-26.

an appeals process.⁴¹¹ In practice, Home Ministry censors preferred seizing copies to forcing public trials, and between 1918 and 1932, only thirty-six people were sent to jail under the Newspaper Law. Censors could also issue official warnings after material was published and force publishers to remove objectionable material before sale. However, even when the Home Ministry declared an issue “banned for sale” (*hatsubai kinshi*), confiscation only removed a small portion of the print run from circulation, estimated at 25% in 1932. This is because authorities only seized the copies still on sale, not copies that had been mailed to subscribers or that had already been sold.⁴¹² In practice, the effect of censorship varied from publication to publication. The publisher of a periodical with extensive circulation, a prestigious reputation, and a respectable operating budget - like the *Asahi Shinbun* or *Chuō Kōron* (*The Central Review*)- might be willing to risk fines to publish a news story that the Home Ministry wanted suppressed. On the other hand, the fines were substantial enough that they could bankrupt a small press.

However, censors also had to contend with the constant increase in printed material throughout the 1920s. Between 1923 and 1936, the number of books published in Japan nearly tripled.⁴¹³ As a result, small journals could often rely on the vast amount of printed material in circulation to slip content past censors, as the censors themselves consciously paid more attention to publications with larger circulation. A small coterie journal (*dōjinshi*) might escape censorship for publishing

⁴¹¹ Gregory Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan: 1918-1945* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993), 16.

⁴¹² Kasza, 29-36.

⁴¹³ Abel, 45.

material that would result in a publication ban for a magazine with a larger circulation. Censors also judged magazines that were perceived as leftist or left-leaning more harshly. For example, Ōya Sōichi complained that the same manuscript would be treated more strictly if it ran in the left-leaning literary and general interest journal *Kaizō (Reconstruction)* than if it ran in the moderate *Chuō Kōron*.⁴¹⁴ Despite the widespread powers given to the Home Ministry under the 1909 Newspaper Law, it was still possible for authors and publishers to print potentially objectionable material without incurring too much personal risk.

However, print media was comparatively less censored than either film or radio. The Home Ministry decided films were “entertainment” rather than “speech,” so they were not given constitutional protection. Ministry officials viewed each film before release and could ban or force cuts for a number of grounds ranging from eroticism to depicting the imperial family. Thus, films could not slip material in after inspection as often happened with periodicals.⁴¹⁵ While film producers and critics chafed at Home Ministry restrictions, many public intellectuals worried about the possible negative effects of the cinema on Japanese youth and supported restrictions on film. Women’s college professor Takamura Heisaburo expressed concerns that moving pictures are shown in dark places, encourage passive viewing, and affect the brains of the young or weak-minded. He hoped for an official committee of experts who would determine what films are acceptable in terms of education, hygiene, and the law.⁴¹⁶ Similarly, Waseda University professor Abe Isō’s editorial, “Moving pictures abuse children,” called for

⁴¹⁴ Abel, 157.

⁴¹⁵ Kasza, 56-71.

⁴¹⁶ Takamura Heisaburo, “Katsudō shashin o riyō se yo,” *Fujin Kōron*, April 1917, 39-42.

more official regulation. Noting that film regulation was already a problem in the United States and Europe, his concern was not that films have more troubling content than other media but that in films such content is more shocking. He was especially bothered by the popularity of Japanese films with revenge plots full of bloodthirsty murderers, which might influence both children and adults.⁴¹⁷ The concerns of Abe and Takamura show that arguments for film control encompassed fears over the technology of cinema and the new social space of the theater, as well as concerns over stories that mocked authority or promoted criminal and violent behavior. Moreover, they believed that the government had both the right and responsibility to regulate mass culture for the public good. Similarly, the Home Ministry required all radio stations to install breakers so that a ministry official could stop any broadcast with objectionable content during transmission. There was also a trend towards direct state control of radio stations, culminating with seventy-nine percent of radio stations being placed under direct control in 1933. Gregory Kasza observes that these controls were comparable to most press laws in European democracies at the time and were more lenient than in the Weimar Republic, where newspapers could be suspended for eight weeks and magazines could be suspended for six months.⁴¹⁸ Overall, the Japanese Home Ministry's control of the nation's film and radio media was comparable to that of other nations, and enjoyed support from many in the public concerned about the potential for film and radio to adversely influence society.

⁴¹⁷ Abe Isō, "Katsudō shashin wa kodomo o gyakutai suru tokoro de aru," *Fujin Kōron*, April 1917, 45-47.

⁴¹⁸ Kasza, 89-96, 112.

Censorship over print media was viewed with greater ambivalence in the mainstream media; though critics would disagree with a specific instance of censorship, most did not challenge the fundamental right of the home ministry to suppress objectionable material. Even editors and authors for magazines which had been penalized by the Home Ministry objected to specific actions of the censor rather than the practice of censorship as a whole. *Fujin Kōron's* (*The Women's Review*) July 1921 special section on censorship, "Investigation into Prohibition of Sales," provides a useful example of how the mainstream press reacted to Home Ministry censorship. The section was inspired by the prohibition of the June 1921 issue, which was the first such ban in the magazine's five and a half year history. In contrast, the publishing company's flagship magazine, *Chuō Kōron* (*The Central Review*), covered more politically controversial topics and had suffered sales bans at least twice before. The ban did not completely remove the issue from circulation; while the publishing company halted sales on ministry orders, subscribers had already received their copies by mail. *Fujin Kōron* was invested in offering a mainstream and moderate response to the conflict of opinion between the magazine's editors and government officials over appropriate material for publication. It featured essays by *Fujin Kōron* editor-in-chief Shimanaka Yūsaku, an author of one of the banned articles, and responses from two intellectuals who would later be associated with leftist movements.⁴¹⁹ Their responses to the *Fujin Kōron* ban reveal the contours of the mainstream censorship debate: while individual officials were charged with shallow reading comprehension and poor judgement, the basic legitimacy

⁴¹⁹ "Hatsubai kinshi no kōsatsu," *Fujin Kōron*, July 1921, 3-4, 14.

of government censorship was undisputed. While each of the essays questioned how much censorship was justified on the grounds of obscenity, no one denied that the government had the right to restrict politically dissident speech.

Shimanaka's opening essay, "On the Sales Ban of Our Magazine's Last Issue: A Declaration of Our Position," walked a fine line between apologizing for the sales ban and defending the June issue's content. He began by dramatizing the shock and dismay he felt when he was informed by another employee from the publishing company that the issue had been banned. There is no question that he felt personally responsible for causing material damages to the company in fines and lost sales, for inconveniencing the magazine's readership, and even worried if "the magazine I wrote contains materials that should be banned from sale."⁴²⁰ Nevertheless, Shimanaka does defend his editorial decisions. He laments that there is no avenue to legally appeal the censor's decisions, but reminds his audience that censors are also human and thus make mistakes.⁴²¹ Without suggesting that the government is wrong to censor the press, he is critical of the absolute rights of individual censors and the lack of a legal appeal process.

Shimanaka also considered it his duty as editor to explain precisely what content was problematic so that the magazine would be able to avoid it in the future. Home Ministry officials had discretion in how much guidance to give publishers and authors, so there was a certain amount of consultation with censors, and guesswork by editors and authors, if a publication wished to avoid being censored. After some thought,

⁴²⁰ Shimanaka Yūsaku, "Yūonshi maego no hatsubai kinshi ni tsuite = wareware no taido wo seimeisu," *Fujin Kōron*, July 1921, 1-3.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

Shimanaka believed that the officials were troubled by feminist and socialist activist Yamakawa Kikue's article "Socialism and Women." Though not a socialist himself, he thought it was important to investigate the movement's strengths and weaknesses. While many of the article's characters were redacted, he felt that its contents might have contained some hidden poison, at least from the perspective of the censors. Despite his personal suspicions, Shimanaka was officially told that the issue was banned from sales due to the special section "Research on Juvenile Delinquents," the letter "To mothers with daughters of marriageable age" by a female supervisor, and Moiwa Toyohei's essay "Men wearing masks of love, women trapped by love" on the grounds of injuring manners and morals (*fūzoku*). This was personally frustrating to Shimanaka, because he believed that the clear intent of all these pieces was to educate readers on dishonest men and troubled youth; indeed, if the goal of the censors was to discourage delinquency and women being tricked, then they ought to have approved of the articles. He ended by saying that Secretary Uno, the government official responsible for banning the issue, called to mind the expression "you can't reason with a whining child" and he defending his educated, upper middle class female readers against implications that they were so suggestible that by reading about delinquency they would become delinquents themselves.⁴²² Shimanaka's emphasis that the articles condemned immoral behavior and thus should be permitted is similar to the way Flaubert was able to avoid condemnation for *Madame Bovary* by adopting a moralizing stance towards the title character.⁴²³ In the same way, Shimanaka leveled the majority of his criticism against

⁴²² Shimanaka, 5-9.

⁴²³ Olmsted, 22-24.

the individual censors who misunderstood the purpose and effect of the supposedly offensive articles; though he raised the suggestion that the real reason for the sales ban was the article on Socialism, he did not broadly challenge the legitimacy of censorship.

Ōyama Ikuo's essay, "From Our Position," followed many of Shimanaka's discursive turns in implying that there was something more than the protection of *fūzoku* in the censor's decision without opposing the right of the Home Ministry to censor magazines in the first place. By 1921, Ōyama had served as a Waseda University professor, member of the *Asahi Shinbun* editorial board, and Socialist party leader; later, he would spend the duration of the war (1932-1947) living in exile in the United States on account of his leftist political beliefs. He began by noting that the sales ban on *Fūjin Kōron* placed the magazine in good intellectual company with a recently banned economics treatise. And like Shimanaka, he suggested that the censor's stated reasons for banning the issue were disingenuous: "I thought those were useful research materials, and not in the least capable of harming society. For that reason, when I heard that the officials were using the running of those love letters as a shield for banning *Fūjin Kōron*, I felt a little inclined to question their common sense."⁴²⁴ However, Ōyama quickly turned to broader concerns with the censorship regime. If officials wanted to fix society's social and economic problems, then the obvious first step is scientific research into those problems, which was made all the more difficult by the tendency of officials to hide and ignore anything that could reflect poorly on their work. He also doubted that censorship was needed to protect readers. If the savvy, educated

⁴²⁴ Ōyama Ikuo, "Karera no tachiba kara," *Fūjin Kōron*, July 1921, 16-17.

Fujin Kōron readership could be so easily corrupted by delinquents, then surely there must be a problem with the police who are seemingly unable to control the problem. At that point, Ōyama appealed to the self-interest of officials, arguing that careless and seemingly groundless bans invited speculation that the officials are only interested in maintaining their own positions and not in what would benefit society.⁴²⁵ Ōyama criticized the judgement of the censors while maintaining throughout his essay that the articles on delinquency and men trapping women with love injured *fūzoku* as a pretext. Yet like Shimanaka, he never fundamentally disputed the legitimacy of banning seditious or otherwise harmful material.

The final essay, “The Mentality of Apparent Supporters of Censorship” by Shirayanagi Shūko, is perhaps the most useful in understanding the theoretical relationship between censorship on the grounds of corrupting public order (*chitsujo binran*) and corrupting public morals (*fūzoku kairan*) in the minds of censors and the press. Shirayanagi was a graduate of Waseda University’s philosophy department; he had been a member of the Heiminsha, a pacifist Socialist party, and later participated in the Proletarian Arts Movement. He opens his essay with two claims: first, a work of literature or a painting cannot corrupt public morals, and second, there is a difference between the political crime of disturbing the peace and the social crime of corrupting morals. In particular, he argues against the idea that preserving a native sense of shyness and discretion was the reason for protecting *fūzoku*. Then, Shirayanagi proceeds to deconstruct various connections between disturbing public peace and

⁴²⁵ Ōyama, 17-19.

corrupting the public morals, drawing on the philosophy of censorship during the Tokugawa Period (1603-1867). Citing historical experience, Shirayanagi argues that no matter how correct the officials or high-minded the upper class, if the foundation of authority is criticized, that side will be censored. While this might be interpreted as selfishness on the part of officials, most people take prohibitions for injuring *fūzoku* as at least having good intentions and so do not criticize it. Furthermore, officials could use their role in protecting *fūzoku* as a justification for their own authority.

Next, looking at Tokugawa censorship laws, Shirayanagi noted that the laws themselves only mention criticism of political authorities. However, if an item is injurious to the public morals, then surely it must contain some criticism of authorities. Thus, people consider protecting public morals and defending the public order to be the same thing. Then Shirayanagi moved on to works showing humanistic portrayals of people and society - a clear analogy to the naturalist fiction that Japanese censors had treated most harshly. This type of work was often problematic to Tokugawa officials because they were invested in maintaining the Confucian social hierarchy with samurai at the top and townsfolk at the lowest level. In reality - and in plays and novels written at the time - many samurai lived in abject poverty and many merchants grew wealthy enough to buy noble titles. Therefore, works that showed the reality of Tokugawa society were a threat to government power because it revealed the political fiction of official ideology. Moreover, works showing how other classes lived might enable and encourage the intermixing of customs between classes. Indeed, Shirayanagi saw this as no different from present day officials persecuting stories from *The Tale of Genji* for including

dancing and romantic content while similar things are permitted for the working classes on the vaudeville stages in Asakusa. Peppering his analysis with examples of works banned by Tokugawa authorities, he concluded that both corrupting the public order and corrupting public morals were criticizing public authorities - officials did not ban works to protect *fūzoku* out of respect for the public's feelings of shyness but acted instead to protect their own power and authority. While Shirayanagi critiqued the use of censorship to protect *fūzoku*, it is again significant that he did not attack the authority of government officials to suppress politically dangerous materials.

The most remarkable aspect of the special section on censorship is that none of the three authors - Shimanaka, Ōyama, or Shirayanagi - questioned the right of government officials to censor material that threatened their political authority. In a fourth article, Moiwa Toyohei, whose articles were identified as the reason the issue was banned, defended his work and criticized officials' judgement in banning his article, even comparing the current censors to the misguided officials struggling against public opinion at the end of the Tokugawa regime. But he too did not fundamentally challenge the assumption that dangerous works should be banned.⁴²⁶ Rather, his protest was over the degree of censorship and the judgement of a particular censor. Considering that *Fujin Kōron* was a mainstream and somewhat conservative magazine that had published essays supporting censorship in the past, the special section on censorship provides a useful and important indicator of common attitudes towards censorship.

⁴²⁶ Moiwa Toyohei, "Ueno jimukan e no kōgi," *Fujin Kōron*, July 1921, 9-15.

Indeed, the class of educated intellectuals that comprised the editors, authors, and readers of *Fujin Kōron* had been profoundly shaken by the increasing number of politically motivated violent incidents. Abe's concern over the danger of films with bloody revenge plots was likely influenced by the seemingly constant reports of assassinations, beatings, and protests in the press. Many wrote editorials against violence in popular magazines. To cite one example, Ken Sawayanagi, writing in the 1923 issue of *Fujin Kōron*, decried the assassination of leftist organizer Takao Heibei by the Sekka Bōshidan (Group to Prevent Turning Red) president as a "meaningless sacrifice" (*muimi naru gisei*) for the sake of ideological struggle.⁴²⁷ Newspapers were filled with similar stories of violent strikes and demonstrations alongside frequent political assassinations. Japanese intellectuals were deeply troubled by the seemingly unstoppable increase in violence in political life. After the Russian Revolution, many right wing groups like Sekka Bōshidan had ostensibly formed to prevent a similar leftist takeover in Japan. Those on the left felt they had no choice but to respond in kind. Many intellectuals saw the state as the sole political actor entitled to use violence, particularly in defense of a peaceful social order, and they were deeply disturbed by the willingness to transform ideological debates into violent struggles, which they believed impeded social progress. As a result, many called for swift suppression of violence by the police, with little concern for individual liberties, such as the right to publish politically disruptive materials. In effect, because many of the right wing groups were supported by government officials - for example, Dai Nihon Kokusuikai (Greater Japan National

⁴²⁷ Ken Sawayanagi, "Sekka bōshi danchō no shasatsu jiken," *Fujin Kōron*, August 1923, 62-66.

Essence Association) was founded by Home Minister Tokunami Takejirō and yakuza bosses concerned with labor unrest - state police action fell more harshly on the left wing groups.⁴²⁸ A similar situation of ongoing political violence by far-right political parties existed in Weimar Germany; however, the German Communist party also had a paramilitary wing capable of serious violence while the Japanese communist party was virtually outlawed.⁴²⁹ Suppression of political violence included the censorship of potentially dangerous media, and although some right wing publications were banned, leftist publications were disproportionately penalized since they did not enjoy the same political support.

By the mid-1920s, members of the Diet had become more receptive to the concerns of the press, and some members of the lower house had begun their careers as journalists. In December 1924, a coalition of sympathetic Diet members and journalists drafted a proposal that would limit Home Ministry control to content that denigrated the imperial family, revealed military secrets, agitated for violent action and specified the type of violent action, or was severely offensive to manners and morals. It also included a reduction in fines. Significantly, the general prohibition on disturbing the public order was dropped.⁴³⁰ However, this proposal was not accepted by the Diet and instead the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 was passed. This law punished agitation (*sendo*) with seven to ten years imprisonment. Agitation was not clearly defined within the legislation, and in practice it fell to bureaucrats to decide what speech constituted

⁴²⁸ Eiko Maruko Siniawer, "Liberalism Undone: Discourses on Political Violence in Interwar Japan," *Modern Asian Studies* 45 (2011): 973-1002.

⁴²⁹ See Eve Rosehaft, *Beating the Fascists? The German Communists and Political Violence 1929-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-8 for a succinct overview.

⁴³⁰ Kasza, 51.

agitation. Gregory Kasza attributes the passage of the law to widespread and “irrational” fears of leftist extremism; even though he estimates that the Japanese Communist Party had fewer than 500 members at the time, he argues that the law was passed due to fears of Soviet espionage and left-leaning intellectuals. Prominent newspapers such as the *Asahi Shinbun* were critical of the law’s chilling effect on democracy and hoped it would be judged unconstitutional, but also supported the suppression of revolutionary elements. The magazine *Kaizō*, which like *Chūō Kōron* combined news reports, editorials, and literature, did publish one leftist analysis which argued that Capitalism needed to promote its own art and scholarship to maintain control of society. However, the article was heavily censored. Other editorials in *Kaizō* emphasized the law’s financial cost to publishers, the law’s constitutional problems, the lack of an appeals process, and artists’ need for creative freedom.⁴³¹ In short, the Diet rejected a more liberal policy towards the press in favor of stricter controls as a result of widespread fears of leftist movements; the mainstream press responded by attacking the particulars of the law and avoiding a clear defense of the left.

Nevertheless, the censors working in the Home Ministry office did not wish to appear unreasonable. Though only films and plays had to be submitted for review prior to distribution and performance, censors would issue guidelines to journalists and publishers about potentially controversial political events. The censors would also consult with authors and publishers about what parts of their work needed to be changed in order to escape censorship. The consultation system lasted until 1927

⁴³¹ Kasza, 40-46.

when the sheer volume of print media exceeded what the Home Ministry could control, at which point the censors began offering open meetings explaining censorship policy instead - a move that created an opening for publishers to distribute objectionable content before the censors were fully aware of it. The system of warnings and consultations allowed the Home Ministry to appear reasonable and attentive towards the literary world and the press, but had little effect on the often arbitrary and opaque decisions of individual censors. The end of the consultation system also allowed publishers to slip material past the censors by making journals subscription only or by printing with the expectation of selling enough copies to break even before the book or magazine issue was removed from publication.

Modernist Writers Respond

Just as the mainstream press published editorials criticizing the censorship system, members of the literary and artistic world expressed their disdain and frustration in art. Among literary stars, the primary concern was that censorship laws limited discussion of love or sex; because of the heavy influence of naturalism and realism on the Japanese literary world, describing real experiences of love was seen as critical for good art and literature. In 1913, Tanizaki Junichirō's play *Koi wa shiru koro* (*The time to learn of love*) was banned by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department and eight years later he satirized the experience in his short story *Kenetsukan* (*The Censor*). Through dialogue between a playwright, K, discussing his play *Hatsukoi* (*First love*) with a

ensor, T, he draws attention to the frequently absurd distinctions the censors made during consultations:

“Could you cut the line ‘with nothing more than a long under-kimono’?”

“Well, how about if I put another layer of kimono on top?”

“Hmm . . . only one? How about two? The more the better, you know.”

“Fine, I’ll deck her out in two more layers.”

“Excellent. Enough said about that.”⁴³²

Certainly many of Tanizaki’s contemporaries would have related to debates over whether one kimono was too erotic but three layers was acceptable, as the line between permissible sensuality and excessively erotic seemed to vary between censors. But he also used K to argue against the censorship system as a whole. T claims to love art, but says that his duty is to promote virtue and chastise vice. K challenges his definition of virtue and his belief that art should promote virtue rather than show the world as it truly is; everyone knows that good people suffer and bad people escape punishment, and people should and do distrust stories with simplistic morals. Here, Tanizaki calls attention to the heavy censorship of naturalist and realist literature in Japan that particularly irritated writers and intellectuals. Furthermore, K believes that the censorship of art is hindering Japan’s social development by preventing new ideas in art. In the end, K and T are forced to acknowledge that their positions are impossible to reconcile.⁴³³

Tanizaki’s story challenged state censorship both in its implementation and on the basic philosophical assumptions that undergirded it; however, his critique was attuned to the charges of obscenity often incurred by writers and artists and did not

⁴³² Tanizaki Junichiro, “The Censor,” trans. by Guohe Zheng in *Modanizumu*, edited by William Jefferson Tyler (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 426.

⁴³³ Tanizaki, 435-444.

address censorship of works for political reasons. Later, he ran afoul of official policies again with his 1928 novel *Manji*, which was censored for discussing birth control at a time when the government was pushing for population expansion.⁴³⁴ Tanizaki's story also demonstrates the different censorship environment modernist writers faced in Japan. D. H. Lawrence's famous 1929 anti-censorship essay, "Pornography and Obscenity," repeatedly refers to the mob response undergirding instances of self-censorship and legal cases: "When it comes to the so-called obscene words, I should say that hardly one person in a million escapes mob-reaction. The first reaction is almost sure to be mob-reaction, mob-indignation, mob-condemnation. And the mob gets no further."⁴³⁵ In Great Britain and the United States, censorship was carried out by an unofficial network of printers, publishers, postmen, and vice crusaders; Lawrence's conclusion that the views of a prudish, anonymous mob determines that certain words cannot be printed was not inaccurate.⁴³⁶ Tanizaki's censor operates with a similar sensibility to Lawrence's mob, making arbitrary distinctions between what is permissible for certain words and opposing any erotic content regardless of the author's intent, in an apparently misguided belief that such content will adversely affect public morality.

Other authors embraced the transgressive power of both obscenity and sedition. Umehara Hokumei based his entire career as a writer and magazine publisher on opposing censorship, most notably with the publication of the notorious *ero-guro*

⁴³⁴ Abel, 184.

⁴³⁵ D. H. Lawrence, "Pornography and Censorship," in *Late Essays and Articles Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 238.

⁴³⁶ See Potter, Chapter 1.

magazine *Gurotesuku* (*Grotesque*) from 1928-1930. After participating in strikes and radical union activities as a junior high student, Umehara moved to Tokyo in 1919, where he studied European literature at Waseda University until he dropped out in 1921. Then, he worked as a freelance translator while working with oppressed *burakumin* groups in Western Japan before his need for notoriety led to his return to Tokyo.⁴³⁷ He became enamored with the idea of translating Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, but since it had been banned by the Home Ministry when Togawa Shukotsu and Ozawa Teizō tried to publish a translation some years prior, he needed a way to force censors to approve the work. After he finished a draft in 1924, he invited the Italian ambassador and other embassy officials, along with some of his own friends, to a party in Asakusa in honor of the five-hundredth anniversary of Boccaccio's death and advertised the event and his forthcoming translation in two Tokyo papers in the week prior. The event generated significant publicity in the art world and the Italian ambassador even presented Umehara with a special cultural award, which he flippantly gave to a waitress after becoming drunk at the party. Because of Umehara's publicity blitz and clever use of the Italian embassy as political cover, the Home Ministry censors had no choice but to quietly allow publication, and the first run of six thousand copies sold out in one month.⁴³⁸ After pursuing a number of translation and editorial projects, Umehara launched the wildly influential *ero-guro* magazine *Grotesque* in 1928. *Grotesque* capitalized on articles full of erotic titillation and disturbing grotesquerie made

⁴³⁷ *Burakumin* means "people who live in villages" and is the preferred term for descendents of outcaste groups originating in the Middle Ages. They were considered unclean due to poverty or a profession involving blood, such as tanning. Burakumin still face discrimination in Japan today.

⁴³⁸ Driscoll, 179-180.

more exciting by their near illegality, while contributing writers made opposition to state censorship a running subtext of their works. As Umehara learned when translating the Decameron, there was both profit and pleasure in outmaneuvering the censors.

One of *Grotesque's* most overt rebukes towards the censors was Saitō Shōzō's ongoing series "A Bibliography of Contemporary Banned Books." The practice of publishing bibliographies of banned books based on internal Home Ministry reports had become an increasingly common practice during the period when the number of censored items was highest, around 1927-1932. Between 1918-1832, the number of journals registered under the Newspaper Law increased from 3,123 to 11,118; by comparison, the number of sanctions including bans and post-publication warnings rose from 902 in 1919 to 3279 in 1931.⁴³⁹ These numbers reflect both an overall increase in the amount of material published as well as an increase in the percent of materials censored. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, about 0.5% of books published each year were censored, but between 1930 and 1933 over 1% of books were banned.⁴⁴⁰ Jonathan Abel characterizes the lists published by Saitō, Odagiri Hideo, and others as displaying "an earnest, database-like objectivity" despite their awareness of their own biases as bibliographers. These lists privileged the context - the work's banned status - over the content of the works, but nevertheless provided a means of publishing the unpublishable. For Abel, bibliographies of banned books represent an important and prominent trace of censorship.⁴⁴¹ While Saitō's bibliography surely prevented the

⁴³⁹ Kasza 32. 1918, the first year the Newspaper Law was in effect, had an abnormally high number of violations.

⁴⁴⁰ Abel, 33.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 44-60.

erasure of banned books by censors, it used the censors' own justification to delegitimize the practice of banning books. Saitō's work was not merely a list, but a subtle critique of censorship.

Saitō published bibliographies in a number of journals, including his own *Bibliography Exhibition*, and undoubtedly he tailored each version to the journal running it. His bibliography in *Grotesque* did not simply list banned books, but also offered frequently sardonic commentary on the reasons for the ban, the current availability of the work in Japan, and often the fate of the author after his work was banned. He used early Meiji bans to criticize the suppression of books for political content. Saitō speculated that a forty-two page volume written by a politician was banned in 1888 because it was "too passionate" about his vision for the nation, and so even though it was hardly anti-government, the book angered government ministers for giving strong advice. The author was sentenced to six months in jail and a fifty yen fine. In the entry describing a banned political tract that was heavily borrowed from Rousseau, Saitō described the Meiji period as "a childish age."⁴⁴² It is left to the reader to infer that Saitō thought the current practice of censoring "passionate" political ideas was similarly "childish." He also drew attention to inconsistencies in official judgement, as when a novel was permitted while it ran as a magazine serial but was banned when collected in a single volume. This was the case with *Ryosha (The Inn)* by Mizuno Yōshū, which was acceptable as a *Chūō Kōrōn (The Central Review)* serial but banned as a novel.⁴⁴³ Similarly, a translation of a story by Henryk Sienkiewicz was banned in

⁴⁴² Saitō Shōzō, "Kindai kinsho kaidai (miteikō)," *Gurostesuku*, October 1928, 139.

⁴⁴³ Saitō Shōzō, "Kindai kinsho kaidai (miteikō)," *Gurostesuku*, March 1929, 67.

1909 because one of the characters kissed his fiancée before the wedding ceremony; but Saitō noted that the movie had since been permitted in Japan, kiss included.⁴⁴⁴ He was also keen to point out how the mixed reception of various aesthetic movements played out in the censor's decisions. For example, the second volume of *A Library of Translated Modern Literature* published by Shinchōsha was banned because the censors did not want to import Naturalism in 1909, yet in the same year they also banned a novel by *Shinshōsetsu* (*The New Novel*) editor Gotō Chūgai, a staunch anti-naturalist.⁴⁴⁵ Of course in 1929, when Naturalism had already been supplanted in the Japanese literary world by the *Shinkankakuha*, *ero-guro* modernism, and the proletarian arts movement, the concern over Naturalist literature must have seemed particularly short-sighted and foolish. Many of the entries were accompanied by images of the banned book's cover, highlighting the incomplete nature of the censorship system and casting doubt on whether ideas could be censored at all, since the magazine's publishers had clearly been able to obtain a copy. Because of Saitō's commentary, sarcastic and critical, his bibliography was not merely a record of all the books banned in Japan, but a canny critique that used the censors' own justifications for prohibiting material to indict the practice.

Saitō's anti-censorship position certainly did not escape his readers - particularly those working for the Home Ministry. An early section of his bibliography opens with the interesting note that the serial was initially published in *Bungei Shijō* (*Arts Market*) but that the work caused trouble for the magazine and the editor was afraid to continue

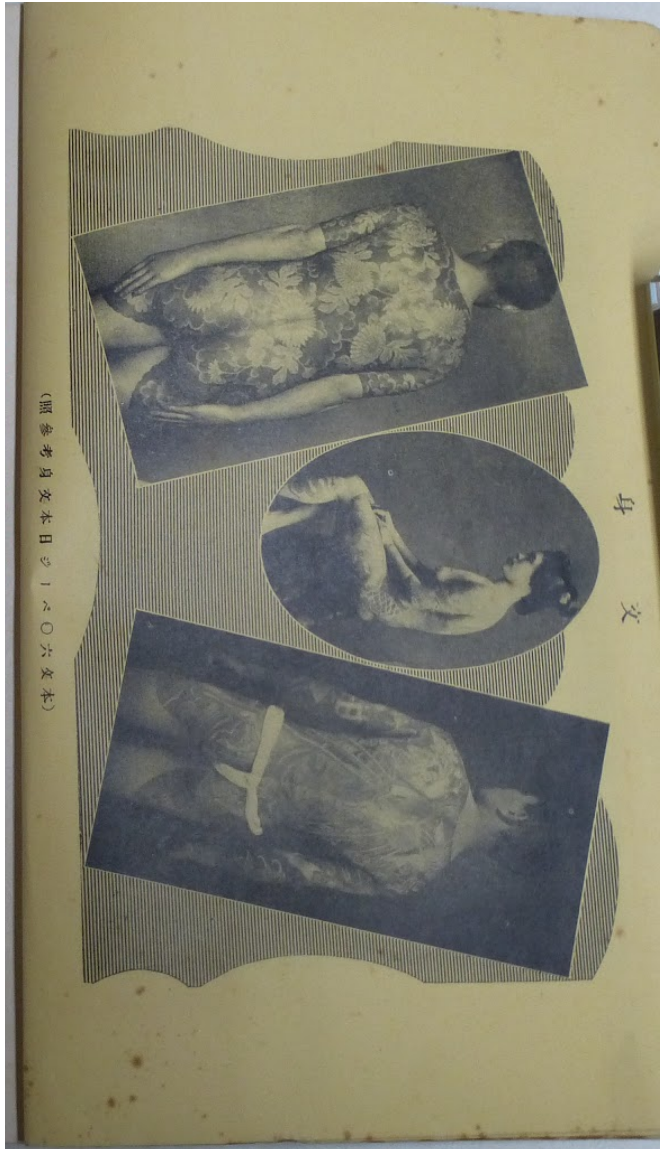
⁴⁴⁴ Sienkiewicz is most famous for his novel *Quo Vadis?* and won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1905. I believe the story rendered in Japanese as 「二人の画工」 is translated in English as "The Third One."

⁴⁴⁵ Saitō, March 1929, 63-64.

running it.⁴⁴⁶ But as many of Saitō's readers were surely aware, Umehara published both *Arts Market* and *Grotesque*, so why did he include the note? Umehara was notorious for using the threat of censorship to gain publicity and public notoriety, and he published and wrote content that was offensive to censors on both political and moral grounds. He also bragged about notable government officials among his subscribers, to intimidate lower ranking censors and add legitimacy to his work.⁴⁴⁷ *Arts Market* was strongly associated with the Proletarian Arts movement, while *Grotesque* was aimed at well-educated intellectuals; in general, the censors were much harder on leftist magazines than ostensibly politically neutral journals that did not threaten the political order. Moving Saitō's work with a helpful note allowed Umehara to offer the now even more exciting content in a safer venue, all while reminding readers of his daring editorial decision. Umehara's strategy of publishing for both mainstream intellectuals and leftists did not always succeed for him since it resulted in distrust and criticism from all sides; nevertheless, all of his works were highly effective in irritating censors and calling attention to the hypocrisy and inconsistencies of censorship laws.

⁴⁴⁶ Saitō, October 1928, 136.

⁴⁴⁷ Abel, 96-98.



Images of tattoos from *Gurotesuku* (March 1929)

Other articles in *Grotesque* presented similarly unsubtle yet indirect critiques of censorship. Tanī Motojirō's "Thoughts on Japanese Tattoos" is noteworthy for skillfully combining talk of criminality and altered bodies with a running critique of government repression of artistic practices. Divided into nineteen sections, Tanī presents his article

as research into the history of Japanese tattoos; like Saitō's bibliography of banned books, Tanī used scholarly respectability as a shield against censors who might not appreciate his commentary. His earliest example of tattooing in Japan was from the venerable *Nihon Shoki*, one of the two oldest surviving texts from classical Japan compiled in 720 C.E., and relates that two nobles were tattooed as punishment for planning a rebellion. Citing the *Nihon Shoki* not only established both the article's credibility as a cultural history but also asserted that tattooing was a traditional, native practice in Japan, and therefore could not offend public morals. Glossing over the sparse mentions of tattooing prior to the seventeenth century, Tanī's narrative resumed in earnest with a detailed description of the criminal tattoos used in different regions of Japan under the Tokugawa shogunate, when criminals used larger and increasingly elaborate tattoos to conceal their criminal records. By the mid-eighteenth century, these large tattoos led to a "Golden Age" of tattooing in Japan, with artistic exchange between tattooists, *ukiyo-e* printmakers such as Utagawa Kuniyoshi, and kabuki actors. Perhaps the most important moment in the rising popularity of tattoos was when kabuki actor Nakamura Utaemon the Third revealed his full back tattoo during a dramatic moment.⁴⁴⁸ Afterwards, tattoos became wildly popular in Edo. However, the shogunate became concerned with decorative tattoos rendering the tattoos used by the state to mark criminals useless, and banned tattooing in 1804.

To summarize Tanī's story thus far, tattoos began as state authority inscribed in the bodies of criminals but was transformed by the same criminals into an art form that

⁴⁴⁸ When a particularly popular kabuki actor retired, he would often give his stage name to his most promising student. Thus, Nakamura Utaemon the Third was the third actor to use the stage name Nakamura Utaemon.

resisted state power and was integrated into other artistic practices such as *ukiyo-e* and kabuki, only to be suppressed again by state authority. Yet the shogunate found it impossible to repress the desire for artistic tattoos, especially among the professions where partial public nudity was common like firemen, construction workers, and palanquin bearers, and gradually the prohibition was loosened. This short break in government oppression was not to last. About 4 or 5 years after the Meiji Restoration, the ban was reinstated and anyone convicted of tattooing themselves or others faced fines and penal servitude. But ironically, this was also the moment when Japanese tattoo artistry gained recognition from westerners. Tanī recounted that when Queen Victoria and Prince Edward visited the Meiji emperor, one of the queen's younger cousins, George, who was an officer on their ship, showed off the Japanese-style tattoo he got in Yokohama in the Japanese Imperial court without knowing that it was illegal. When Prince Edward learned of the ban on tattoos, he lobbied to have it lifted.⁴⁴⁹ Though this anecdote contains some historical impossibilities, Tanī's message is clear: Westerners appreciate the artistry of tattoos, even when the Japanese authorities refuse to legalize it.⁴⁵⁰ Tanī's essay functioned on multiple levels: it was as it appeared a history of Japanese tattooing, but it also criticized government bans on art, particularly when the objectionable art arose naturally from the lower classes. And the essay offered the perfect pretext for including photographic plates of nudes with full body

⁴⁴⁹ Queen Victoria never visited Japan, though Prince Edward and Prince George visited in 1881 while serving on the warship HMS *Bacchante*.

⁴⁵⁰ Tanī Motojirō, "Thoughts on Japanese Tattoos," *Gurostesuku*, March 1929, 60-77.

tattoos.⁴⁵¹ Tanī used scholarly research that did not openly offend public morals or disrupt public order to tattoo over his critique of suppression of art by the government.

Tanī's essay also appealed to the interest in the study of crime and criminal psychology in *ero-guro* magazines. Stories of true crime and historical punishment were less likely to offend the censors than detective fiction because they could make claims of historical and journalistic merit without showing how to escape punishment or appearing to condone crime.⁴⁵² At the same time, tales of historical punishment offered a degree of sadomasochistic titillation for the reader. For example, one installment of Saida Reimon's series of essays "A History of the World's Cruel Punishments" lovingly detailed the types and numbers of chains used to punish different religious and civil crimes in Early Modern Europe ranging from public drunkenness to shrewishness.⁴⁵³ Emphasizing the exoticness of the punishments by modern standards, the piece can also be read as a critique of a state's cruelty towards its own citizens. At the same time, Saida's descriptions and the accompanying illustrations offer fuel for any sado-masochistic fantasies the reader may wish to indulge. Moreover, the criminal as a rhetorical figure could embody the desire to oppose the excesses of state power or individual petty authorities. One true crime story from the same issue of *Grotesque* described a grifter active in the 1870s who, with the help of an adolescent accomplice, convinced all the officials of a town in Kanagawa Prefecture that he was a representative of a boy's school looking to stage a mock battle and public exhibition

⁴⁵¹ Since the tattooed individuals were presumably either criminals or lower class, their bodies could offer voyeuristic pleasure to *Gurostesuku's* upper-class readers.

⁴⁵² Abel, 91.

⁴⁵³ Saida Reimon, "Sekai sangyaku keibatsushi (san)," *Gurotesuku*, October 1928, 53-59.

featuring his school's students. On the basis of his imagined authority, the man accepted free lodging, free meals, and borrowed a horse and an expensive watch that he never returned. Though the piece is sympathetic towards the local children whose hopes of an exciting spectacle were cruelly spoiled, the author takes a mocking tone towards the local officials who were all too willing to go along with the con.⁴⁵⁴ As the crime was fairly petty and happened well in the past, retelling it was unlikely to offend the censors even though the story ends ambiguously with the police still hunting for the con man in 1882. Nevertheless, the story invites readers to laugh at the foolish officials who were outsmarted by a grifter and savor the thought of petty government agents being humiliated by a criminal.

Hanzai Kagakagu (Criminal Science) was a lowbrow successor to *Grotesque* which ran from 1930-1932 and emphasized salacious tales of crime and punishment, among other *ero-guro* subjects. These stories often followed the same practice used in *Grotesque* of writing about historical or foreign crimes as a way of commenting on the actions of contemporary authorities. One article by Nagata Kaneo, titled "A *Nansensu* Tragedy," described a seventeenth-century English case in which a servant, his wife, and two children were punished for the disappearance, and presumed death, of an elderly butler even though the only connection was that the servant had tried and failed to find the butler on the night the man went missing. Nagata's interest in the historical case is indicated in his introduction, where he says that the people of England have historically considered their country a liberal and free (*jiyū shugi*) nation. However, he

⁴⁵⁴ Mayama Asatarō, "Kinsei sajutsu torimono kangae," *Gurotesuku*, October 1928, 116-122.

uses the case to show how easily a man could be convicted of murder on purely circumstantial evidence, without either a body or a bullet.⁴⁵⁵ Since the Meiji period, translators like Kuroiwa Ruiko had used foreign detective stories and true crime accounts to comment on Japanese political scandals and government actions.⁴⁵⁶ Given this context, Nagata's interest in the old English case is to show how the police and judiciary can persecute innocent people when they cannot uncover the true facts of the case in a supposedly liberal society. And because he chose a case that was foreign, historical, and seemingly unrelated to contemporary Japan, it was unlikely to offend censors concerned with maintaining the image of the Japanese police and judiciary. However, readers who understood the context of crime and detective fiction would appreciate the pointed subtext of Nagata's story, concealed in the "nonsense" of an irrelevant historical case.

Scholarly respectability and historical research also served as cover for publishing erotically charged images and articles in *Grotesque* and *Criminal Science*. Throughout the Taishō period, there was widespread public interest in developing a correct knowledge of sexuality and in understanding what is normal and what is desirable for Japanese society.⁴⁵⁷ Censors saw overly erotic material as dangerous to society and a challenge to their authority. Thus, authors wishing to write on erotically charged subjects, even when their purpose was less scholarly and more salacious, or even seditious, used the discourses of popular sexology to justify the merit of their

⁴⁵⁵ Nagata Kaneo, "Nansensu naru higeki," *Hanzai Kagaku*, August 1932, 185-188.

⁴⁵⁶ See Satoru Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of the Japanese Novel, 1880-1930*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), chapter 2.

⁴⁵⁷ See Driscoll and Sabine Fruhstuck, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

works to censors. For example, Kishima Kuwa's article on prostitutes offers both colorful descriptions of the prostitutes working in various European cities as well as enough citations from sociologists to appear plausibly academic.⁴⁵⁸ Similarly, Ōsumi Tamezō's essay, "Perverse sexual desire," includes tales of debauchery by Roman emperors alongside descriptions of works by contemporary European sexologists, both amateur and professional.⁴⁵⁹ Publishers of books containing erotic content adopted similar tactics; an ad run by Bukyōsha Publishing proudly declared that its books would "open the forbidden door!" In the description of one book, "Women's Bewitching Charms," the advertising copy assured readers that it overflowed with vampires, superstitions, and other grotesque topics. These books were more likely to be overlooked by censors if they appeared somehow educational or invested in improving public hygiene. And in an ironic twist, since obscenity was officially banned for disturbing the public morals, or *fūzoku*, publishers prominently included the promise of *fūzoku* in their advertisements. Erotic content could be disseminated despite the prohibition on material damaging to the public morals, provided that it appeared sufficiently scholarly and did not openly challenge the censors. Nevertheless, since obscenity and sedition were closely linked in censorship laws and practice, publishing erotic material was yet another way of expressing opposition to censorship.

⁴⁵⁸ Kishima Kuwa, "Baiin ni kansuru - kōsatsu," *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1931, 19-24.

⁴⁵⁹ Ōsumi Tamezō, "Hentai Seiyoku," *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1931, 75-83.

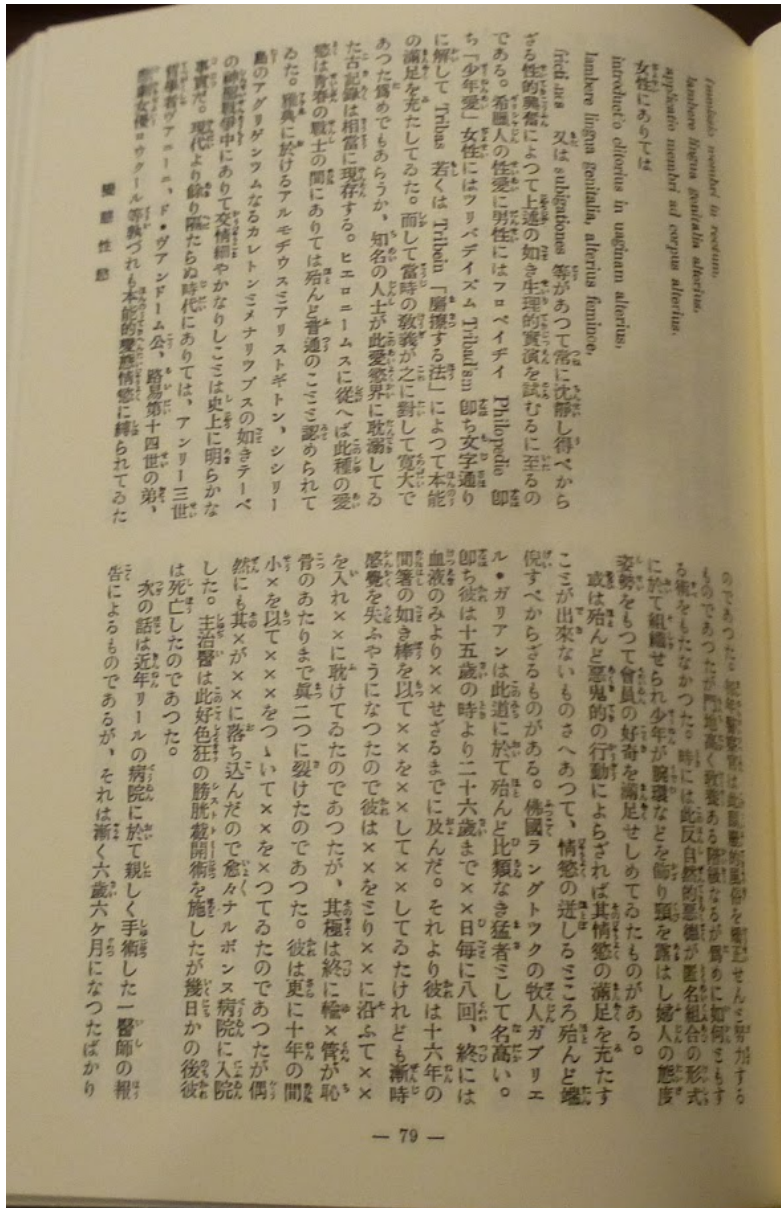


Figure 18: Excerpt from Ōsumi Tamezō's essay, "Perverse sexual desire," showing both Latin text and characters replaced by X fuseiji; Ōsumi Tamezō, "Hentai Seiyoku," *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1931; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008).

Ōsumi's essay also offers some useful examples of other techniques to slip content past censors. Many of the characters in Ōsumi's more descriptive passages

were littered with *fuseiji*, an X or ○ symbol replacing the original character. Naturally, too many *fuseiji* rendered a text unreadable, but in some cases where only one or two characters were removed, it was easy to fill in the missing characters. *Fuseiji* were invented in the 1870s after the passage of a new press law, and though they were forbidden in 1885, the Home Ministry never enforced the ban. Censors, authors, and editors all disliked the use of *fuseiji* but their presence allowed publications to navigate the often arbitrary and opaque censorship codes. Censors particularly objected to easily understood *fuseiji*, such as simply replacing words like “revolution” or “Communism.” Author Tokuda Shūsei complained that the *fuseiji* in his story recording the death of a proletarian writer at the hands of the police could lead the reader to interpret the content as more objectionable than it originally was. On the other hand, the *fuseiji* in Edogawa Ranpo’s story *Mushi (Maggots)*, which ran in the 1929 issue of *Kaizō (Reconstruction)*, made a heavily redacted necrophilia scene much more taboo than in restored postwar versions of the text.⁴⁶⁰ In addition, foreign languages could also serve as a slightly less opaque form of *fuseiji*. Ōsumi included Latin passages describing male and female homosexual acts, with a note that translations would be problematic to include so readers should consult a medical dictionary to get a sense of the meaning.⁴⁶¹ *Fuseiji* could function as a pro forma nod to censors that hid nothing, or having rendered a passage unreadable, their presence could serve as a reminder to readers present and future of the censorship regime. In *ero-guro* works, *fusieji* were yet another tool to publish the seditious and obscene without, strictly speaking, publishing it.

⁴⁶⁰ Abel, 147, 174-181.

⁴⁶¹ Ōsumi, 78-79.

Indeed, *fuseiji* often functioned as political *nansensu*, rendering an explicit political statement unintelligible without outside context.

Apparent meaninglessness or irrelevance used to conceal criticism of the government took many forms in addition to *fuseiji* in *ero-guro* magazines. For example, one article from *Grotesque* claims to be a first person account of a nonsensical conversation with a mental patient in an asylum, but when read between the lines, is actually attacking government spending on the imperial household and official policy on China. Ozeki Kōsaborō titled his article “Megalomania Unrivaled Under Heaven: A Conversation with General Ashihara.” General Ashihara was a patient at Sugamo mental hospital when the Meiji Emperor visited in 1881; he became famous in the press for familiarly addressing the emperor with the phrase “Wait a minute, brother.” General Ashihara became a common stand-in for the emperor who could not be represented in print under censorship codes, often characterized by a comically inflated noble bearing.⁴⁶² In Ozeki’s article, Ashihara presides over a deranged version of the imperial palace. The asylum director, wardens, and Ozeki all use polite and formal Japanese in referring to “our dear General Ashihara,” though the director requires a cash payment in order to provide an audience. Ashihara himself enjoyed a private room and was (supposedly) attended by about one hundred “ladies-in-waiting” and three hundred “chamberlains,” who were actually fellow patients. Ozeki recounts his conversation with Ashihara as a dialogue, using the character for emperor (帝) to mark Ashihara’s words. On the

⁴⁶² Masachi Osawa, “Indignity for the Emperor, Equality for the People: Taishō Democracy and the Transition from Nationalism to Ultrnationalism in Modern Japan,” in *The Dignity of Nations: Equality, Competition and Honor in East Asian Nationalism*, ed. by Yongxiang Qian and John Fitzgerald, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), 44-45.

anti-war question, Ashihara comments that “if this money were distributed in Tokyo, the recession would take a turn for the better.” Similarly, on China policy, Ashihara points to “his” Twenty-One Demands and implies that China is a gold mine for the Japanese. Ashihara even produced a listing of his cabinet - all “genuine Tokugawa senior retainers” - in which the officials were very seriously matched with the wrong political offices.⁴⁶³ In Ozeki’s account, the emperor is a deluded madman surrounded by equally mad courtiers, enjoying a far better standard of living than the other inmates. However, in his madness he speaks unspeakable political truths: money spent on the military takes away from domestic spending, treaties seek to exploit China’s political problems for Japanese financial gain, and the emperor likely does not care who serves in what position in what is supposedly his cabinet. Ozeki repeatedly writes at the beginning of his account that he found the rooms of mad patients terrifying, but because he did not want his friend Umehara to sneer and think him a coward, he continued to his audience with Ashihara. Though it would seem melodramatic to be afraid of asylum inmates when accompanied by a warden, Ozeki’s true fear of incurring the wrath of the censor’s office was not unfounded. What is presented as the deluded ramblings of a madman who thinks he is emperor is really a critique of government policy and officials who may as well be madmen.

⁴⁶³ Ozeki Kōsabrō, “Tenka futeki no kodai mōsōkyō: Ashihara shōgun to kataru,” *Gurotesuku*, October 1928, 129-135.

***Ero-guro-nansensu* and the Proletarian Arts Movement**

Political *nansensu* often repeated leftist views; since leftist political positions were most heavily censored by the state, anything Marxist or anti-capitalist became excitingly transgressive. As a result, *ero-guro* magazines have been associated with the political left despite exploitive representations of the poor and working class. By contrast, the Proletarian Arts Movement worked to use art and literature to develop class consciousness in the urban masses. It began in the tumultuous period after the Great Kanto Earthquake, in response to the assassinations of a number of labor leaders. It encompassed all forms of art including theater, visual arts, and literature and much of it was intended as political agitation.⁴⁶⁴ During the 1920s, many circles were formed, re-formed, or disbanded in support of proletarian arts, under constant pressure from internal ideological disputes and periodic government crackdowns. Artists debated whether to emphasize Marxist theory, as Communist Party leader Fukumoto Kazuo advocated, or the older position promoted by Yamakawa Hitoshi, which stressed contact with the masses and concrete progress towards leftist goals. Events such as the March 15th (1928) Incident, where over twelve hundred suspected party members were arrested and over fifty offices of leftist organizations were raided, decimated the various arts groups' leadership.⁴⁶⁵ Despite the relatively small number of members and relatively heavy degree of government suppression, the proletarian arts movement inspired artists outside of their organizations to produce works sympathetic to the

⁴⁶⁴ Gennifer Weisenfeld, "The Expanding Arts of the Interwar Period," in *Since Meiji: Perspectives on Japanese Visual Arts, 1868-2000*, edited by J. Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 82-83.

⁴⁶⁵ Abe Markus Nornes, *Japanese Documentary Films: the Meiji Era Through Hiroshima*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 19-20, 29.

structural inequalities facing the poor. For example, the major literary journal *Kaizō* (*Reconstruction*) became known for publishing stories sympathetic to the left; at the same time, tendency films, named for their tendency towards leftist sentiments, filled Japanese theaters and were directed by notables such as Mizoguchi Kenji and Ozu Yasujiro. While the Proletarian Arts Movement could not save the Communist Party from government suppression, its ideals and values had a significant influence on mass culture disproportionate to the small actual number of leftists.

The widespread influence of the proletarian arts movement has led many later historians and critics to assume that *ero-guro* was also *puro* - that is, that erotic grotesque aesthetics were also proletarian. However, most *ero-guro* magazines were only interested in the lower classes in so far as they provided titillating subjects for readers, such as descriptions of sensational crimes or licensed quarters. In particular, Umehara's legacy has proved difficult for scholars to interpret because he published both *ero-guro* and leftist material. Many Japanese biographers, including his son Umehara Masaki, have given precedence to his work on magazines like *Arts Market*, placing him firmly among other leftists in the Proletarian Arts Movement. But this was largely due to the fetishization of pure proletarian art during the immediate postwar, as Japanese literary scholars struggled to understand why so many writers of the 1920s and 1930s appeared complicit with mainstream militarist ideologies. Thus the shift to see Umehara as a proletarian publisher and writer is in part an effort to rehabilitate his image as a purveyor of smut and decadence. Jonathan Abel claims that there were "explicit ties between sexual liberation and expression, on the one hand, and political

movement and revolution, on the other.” In other words, it was an “*ero-puro*” movement.⁴⁶⁶ Similarly, Mark Driscoll argues that Umehara’s work was an implicit argument that capitalism makes non-commodified art impossible - capitalism itself is perverse.⁴⁶⁷ However, this interpretation fails to account for the many ways in which *ero-guro* was decidedly working against the left within its texts. Even when *ero-guro* does appear to sympathize with the lower classes, it fails to call for meaningful social change and seems to be using the appearance of leftism to (once again) provoke the censors and gain notoriety. As the practice of censorship rested on the legitimacy of officials preventing both the corruption of public order and the corruption of public morals, it was natural to attack official policy on both fronts. Moreover, while the Japanese proletarian arts movement attempted to act in solidarity with its Korean counterpart, *ero-guro* magazines depicted the people of Japan’s colonies as the uncivilized counterpart to modern Tokyoites.⁴⁶⁸ Domestically, *ero-guro* magazines were far more interested in the lumpenproletariat - that is, the dishonorable criminals, prostitutes, and drunks ever willing to sell out to the bourgeoisie for enough money - than the noble workers. The problem with emphasizing leftist ideology in *ero-guro* is that it was hardly representative of the genre.

Given Umehara Hokumei’s work on *Arts Market* and with leftist groups, *Grotesque* might be expected to express the most solidarity with the proletarian arts

⁴⁶⁶ Abel, 102, 109-111.

⁴⁶⁷ Driscoll, 163-170.

⁴⁶⁸ Emiko Kida notes that the alliance between the Japanese proletarian arts movement and Korean proletarian arts movement was always hindered by the Japanese desire for internationalism at the expense of the Korean need for decolonization. See Emiko Kida, “Japanese-Korean Exchange within the Proletarian Arts Movement,” trans. by Brian Bergstrom, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 14, vol. 2:(2006), 495-525. See also Chapter 4.

movement. However, few articles during the magazine's first two years were concerned with the struggles of the working class. One of the few exceptions was a multi-part article by Umehara himself on burakumin and beggars during the Edo Period, which appeared in the October and November issues of 1929 and the January issue of 1930. The series emphasized the many laws passed by the Tokugawa government to control low status groups; in addition, Umehara emphasized the role of local heads of beggar and outcaste groups to maintain control.⁴⁶⁹ Between the continual emphasis on legal controls and the focus on historical, rather than present, conditions, the series supports the overall anti-authoritarian stance of *Grotesque* more than specific sympathy for the poor. Most other articles about the lower classes that ran in the first two years of *Grotesque* covered prostitution, drug use, and criminal penalties, offering more titillation than revolutionary spirit. Moreover, while leftist magazines usually included *furigana* readings next to kanji so that their writing would be theoretically accessible even to workers with only a limited education, *Grotesque* had no *furigana* and frequently used obscure kanji and historical references. It was clear Umehara expected his readers to be university-educated men like him, and in fact his educated and often well-connected subscriber base likely kept him from facing serious fines or prison sentences. This did not preclude him from including occasional leftist material, since association with the left

⁴⁶⁹ Umehara Hokumei, "Edo jidai: hinin gojiki," *Gurotesuku*, October 1929, 95-126, reprinted in *Grotesuku* Vol. 1, ed. by Shimamura Teru, (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2015), 107-138; Umehara Hokumei, "Edo jidai: hinin gojiki," *Gurotesuku*, November 1929, 116-133, reprinted in *Grotesuku* Vol. 1, ed. by Shimamura Teru, (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2015), 313-329; Umehara Hokumei, "Edo jidai: hinin gojiki," *Gurotesuku*, January 1930, 132-151, reprinted in *Grotesuku* Vol. 2, ed. by Shimamura Teru, (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2015), 144-163.

was guaranteed to attract attention and publicity while adding a transgressive appeal to his projects.

Like *Grotesque*, *Hanzai Kagaku* at times appeared sympathetic to the poor, yet ultimately drew readers' attention to sensational topics like crime and prostitution. Many of the articles on criminals are not unsympathetic towards people driven into crime by poverty; for example, an article in *Hanzai Kagaku* offering commentary on recent crimes judges the people who assassinated Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi and the corrupt executives of Tokyo Electric Company more harshly than the son who killed his mentally ill mother because he could not afford appropriate treatment for her.⁴⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the overall impression of the working class left by *ero-guro* magazines is one of criminality, prostitution, gambling, and desperation - a sharp contrast to their modern, savvy, bourgeois readers. A good example of this is the June 1932 special section on "The Kings of Poverty," a series of articles on criminality and vice among the poor around the world. The first, "A Den of Vagabonds (Hobohemia)," describes the lifestyle of American hobos, including illustrations and descriptions of frequent drinking and crime. At the end, however, the author does point out the irony of such poverty in the land where capitalism was born.⁴⁷¹ "Running through Shanghai at Night" and "Soviet Red Lumpenproletariat" both borrow the language of Marxism while blaming the poorest of the poor for their own problems. The lumpenproletariat are criminals, addicts, and the like; in Marx's writing, they are class traitors who should be aligned with the working classes moving towards revolution but instead sell out to the bourgeoisie. The

⁴⁷⁰ Tankai Katsu, "Hanzai jihyō," *Hanzai Kagaku*, April 1931, 30-37.

⁴⁷¹ Sugi Chikuma, "Mujiyakusha no sōkutsu (hobohemia)," *Hanzai Kagaku*, June 1932, 108-119; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008.

Shanghai “lumpen” (*runpen*) are depicted as opium addicts and thieves, while the Soviet “lumpen” are used to show that despite socialist victory, there are still poor people lamenting their condition.⁴⁷² Two other articles, “The Bandits of Corsica” and “The Secret of Paris Gangs,” return to frequent ground for the magazine; the first describes Corsican gangs attacking travelers and compares them to Al Capone, and the second covers a Paris true crime kidnapping and ransom that could have appeared in a Victor Hugo novel.⁴⁷³ “The Kings of Poverty” exemplifies the extent of *Hanzai Kagaku*’s interest in the poor: authors might criticize capitalism for leaving so many people in poverty, but the poor were also criminals and addicts and thus partly responsible for their state, and socialist revolution would in no way help, as demonstrated by the persistence of a lumpenproletariat in the Soviet Union. Poverty was merely another entertainingly grotesque spectacle for the magazine’s readers.

Moreover, leftists writing at the height of both movements were well aware of the bourgeois impulses of *ero-guro*. Published in leftist film journal *Tokiwa on Parade*, Date Sakon’s manifesto “The Transformation of the Movie Business and Tomorrow’s Problems” characterizes *ero-guro* films as capitalist feed for the bourgeois consumers: “the films of the cinema public - that is, the primary audience of the leisured middle classes, petit bourgeois, leisured students, and unorganized laborers - force them to dance to the sinister schemes of the ruling class, using the tempting bait of

⁴⁷² Kurata Torao, “Sovēto no akaki runpen,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, June 1932, 149-156; Tomeba Sorachibu, “Shinya no shanghai o hashiru,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, June 1932, 130-138; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008.

⁴⁷³ Iwasaki Sumitaka, “Corushika no sanzoku,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, June 1932, 122-129; Yuzuma, “Pari gyangu no himitsu,” *Hanzai Kagaku*, June 1932, 157-165; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21*. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008.

ero-guro-nansensu or happy-sad action films.” Date considered *ero-guro* films - and presumably *ero-guro* media as a whole - as part of a pernicious and pervasive mass culture that pacified everyone who lacked a Marxist consciousness.⁴⁷⁴ Though his final vision of a cinema dominated by state-produced, objective socialist documentary films is perhaps extreme, his attitude towards *ero-guro* was not uncommon among leftists.

On the other hand, Hata Kōichi’s essay “Ero, Guro, and Film” attempted to salvage the *ero-guro* movement for the left. He characterized *ero-guro* as “the limit of what is allowed” overflowing with eroticism and grotesque interests. He wrote that it existed in the hearts of producers facing the government censors; that is, there would not be a movement towards “the limit of what is allowed” if such a limit did not exist. Hata agreed with other leftists that most of the present *ero-guro* craze was a passing fad, but then quoted the words of a government censor at a public meeting on film standards: “*the limit of what is allowed* does not seem to be fixed.” Hata’s essay points out that commonality between *ero-guro* and the left is a shared opposition to the censors; indeed, if the *ero-guro* movement can push the boundaries of the permissible further then it would benefit the left even if *ero-guro* aesthetics do not directly support the left.⁴⁷⁵ It is important to bear in mind that contemporary leftists did not see *ero-guro* as advancing their cause, except when it drew the censors’ attention away from their work or broadened the limits of permissible speech. In the end, it is perhaps more accurate to view *ero-guro* aesthetics and the Proletarian Art Movement as uneasy allies in their opposition to state suppression.

⁴⁷⁴ Date Sakon, “Eiga kigyō no tenkō to ashita no mondai,” *Tokiwa on parareido*, May 1931, 9-11.

⁴⁷⁵ Hata Kōichi, “Ero to guro to - eiga to,” *Tokiwa on parareido*, May 1931, 6-7.

Like Western modernists who recovered a “transgressive energy” from attempts to censor their work for obscenity, *ero-guro* magazine writers and editors capitalized on restrictions on sexual and political content to produce a compensatory thrill at testing the boundaries of what was permitted. Even as writers bristled at Home Ministry censors, they developed increasingly creative methods of printing erotically charged anecdotes or scathing political rebukes. The fact that both political and obscene material could be censored in Japan led to a linking of leftist politics and eroticism that did not exist in Anglo-American modernism. Nevertheless, the lack of genuine sympathy for the poor and working classes in *ero-guro* magazines shows that their real interest lay in the compensatory thrill found in testing the limits of what could be published.

Chapter 06

The End of *Ero-guro-nansensu*

Akutagawa Ryūnosuke famously described the feeling of Taishō and Early Shōwan Japan as a “vague unease.” In 1933, Miki Kyoshi wrote an influential article for the literary magazine *Kaizō* (*Reconstruction*) entitled “The Philosophy of Anxiety and its Transcendence,” using the same word for anxiety or unease as Akutagawa (*fuan*). He argued that “a man who has lost faith in society or has been precluded from taking social action will necessarily be driven further and further inside himself.”⁴⁷⁶

Ero-guro-nansensu discourses had sought to contain and overcome the anxieties of modern life, yet it is clear that in 1933, Miki and the readers who related to his essay still felt a great deal of anxiety. Within the Japanese literary world, Miki’s essay marked the moment *ero-guro* modernism was supplanted by romanticism. As Kevin Doak has argued, the Japanese Romantics (*Nihon Romanha*) believed modernity continued to be a problem and appealed to writers who still sought to confront the legacies of modernity. They favored a popular nationalism characterized by nostalgia and traditional aesthetics while opposing literary modernism.⁴⁷⁷ Miki later became part of the Kyoto group of

⁴⁷⁶ Quoted in Kevin Michael Doak, *Dreams of Difference: The Japan Romantic School and the Crisis of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), XX-XXI.

⁴⁷⁷ Doak, XII, XVI-XVII.

philosophers who linked their critique of modern culture with the wartime formation of an Asian cooperative union that could overcome Western philosophy. He participated in the influential July 1942 conference at Kyoto University, where members of the Kyoto Philosophy School and the Japan Romantic Literary School met to discuss the world-historical implications of war with China and the United States.⁴⁷⁸ Thus one reason for the disappearance of *ero-guro-nansensu* discourses around 1932-1933 was a widespread turn within the literary world towards the recovery of native culture, a restoration of the national community, and a desire to lose oneself in a state of wholeness.

The shift in Tanizaki Junichirō's work that occurred in the late 1920s and early 1930s is a clear example of the turn away from a Western-inflected modernism towards traditional aesthetics. The "great change" theory among literary scholars saw a process of maturation in his work in which he gave up youthful interest in the West and discovered the appeal of Japanese aesthetics after his move to the Kansai region.⁴⁷⁹ Phyllis Lyons argues that his 1928 novel, *Kokubiyaku (In Black and White)* marked an important turning point in his work. The protagonist, Mizuno, is a writer who has published a story about the murder of a fictional stand-in representing Kojima, an author he knows personally and that his readers will almost certainly recognize; the plot follows his attempts to establish an alibi in case Kojima is actually murdered. Mizuno is a clear

⁴⁷⁸ Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 38-43. However, Miki called for an organic, folkic space unified by shared culture; cultural rather than colonial, it was distinct from Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere called for by imperial Japan.

⁴⁷⁹ Thomas LaMarre, "Conclusion: A-modality and the Dialectics of Rivalry," in *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun'ichirō on Cinema and "Oriental" Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 2005), 356-357.

parody of the literary I-novel (*watakushi shosetsu*) protagonist, often a man who lives in artistic poverty despite a good education and describes in detail his physical and emotional affairs with various women. He fears being falsely accused of Kojima's murder by the literary establishment (*bundan*), who frequently take fiction as fact and are more interested in spreading rumors about authors' personal lives than in responding to their artistry.⁴⁸⁰ *In Black and White* is also a parody of the detective story where an increasingly paranoid protagonist strings together a series of coincidences and, as a direct result of his imagined guilt, convinces himself or others that he has committed a murder. The story ends with the police arresting Mizuno and forcing him to write a confession; Tanizaki apologizes for the abrupt finish in a one-paragraph afterword. *In Black and White* is significant because it is the last work in which he engages with the major concerns of *ero-guro* modernism - for example, the problems of perception, the relationship between the author and the text, and the trace of the individual - and the ending suggests Tanizaki is no longer interested in those issues. His later works such as *Tade kū mushi* (*Some Prefer Nettles*, 1929), *In'ei raisan* (*In Praise of Shadows*, 1933) or *Sasameyuki* (*The Makioka Sisters*, 1943-1948), emphasize instead the search for a Japanese identity and aesthetic that can exist alongside Western modernity.

Similarly, Kawabata Yasunari, author of the scenario for *Kurutta Ippeiji* (*A Page of Madness*, 1926) and *Asakusa Kurenaidan* (*The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, 1930), a serialized novel about the modern culture of Tokyo, moved away from using

⁴⁸⁰ Phyllis Lyons, "Translator's afterword," in *In Black and White: a Novel*, by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, trans. by Phyllis Lyons (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 220-224.

experimental and disjunctive writing to represent modern culture in the early 1930s. One of his most famous novels, *Yukiguni* (*Snow Country*, 1935-1937, 1948), follows a love affair between a translator from Tokyo and a hot spring geisha in rural Japan. Alan Tansman describes the novel's setting as a place "where the fractured modern consciousness can be cured, a space of merging and wholeness, a space that is white."⁴⁸¹ At the end of *Snow Country*, the protagonist loses his individual identity and merges with a pure and authentic wholeness; nevertheless, he returns to Tokyo, which Tansman argues keeps the story from completely succeeding in absorbing him and making the novel fascist.⁴⁸² Both Tansman and Harry Harootunian are careful to note that an aesthetic can fuel fascist ideology without the author consciously intending such a reading.⁴⁸³ While Kawabata emphasized a return to a feeling of wholeness in a pure and natural Japanese environment, he did not explicitly support the war. In 1968, he was the first Japanese author to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

In contrast to the positive postwar reception of Kawabata and Tanizaki, authors who were less successful in avoiding explicitly ideological writing did not fare as well. By the early 1930s, Satō Haruo had ceased commenting on current events in his stories. He abandoned his interest in social outsiders, such as dreamers, opium addicts, and aboriginal Taiwanese, for writing that promoted nationalism and supported the war effort, formally joining the Japanese Romantic School (*Nihon Rōmanha*) literary group.⁴⁸⁴ In 1938, he entered the Japanese Navy's Creative Writers Division and

⁴⁸¹ Alan Tansman, *The Aesthetics of Japanese Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 119.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁸³ Harootunian, XXIX; Tansman, 149.

⁴⁸⁴ Charles Exley, *Satō Haruo and Modern Japanese Literature* (Boston: Brill, 2016), 6.

produced news reports of the war along with patriotic poems.⁴⁸⁵ This decision contributed to the lack of critical interest in his work after the war.⁴⁸⁶

The other reason for the disappearance of *ero-guro-nansensu* was increasingly strict censorship. After the flurry of warnings to the press issued in the wake of the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the May Fifteenth Incident of 1932, the increasing militarization of the Japanese state made continued resistance to state censorship impossible to maintain. Though the overall number of banned periodicals decreased, it is easy to see that this was not the result of loosening controls but rather greater fear of violating publishing norms. The series of mass arrests in 1933-1934 under the Peace Preservation Law all but eliminated leftist publications.⁴⁸⁷ But perhaps the most chilling incident was the campaign against legal scholar Minobe Tatsukichi in 1935. He was a professor emeritus at Tokyo University who wrote an editorial against a controversial Army Ministry pamphlet for *Chūō Kōron*. Despite supporters including the emperor himself, he was railroaded by the Army and Navy ministries and forced to resign all offices. His house was placed under guard to protect him from attacks by right wing groups and his friends ceased contact out of fear.⁴⁸⁸ After watching a respectable, conservative intellectual suffer harsh social penalties, it is easy to understand why *ero-guro* writers and publishers were no longer willing to push the limits of permissible speech.

⁴⁸⁵ Christopher T. Keaveney, *Beyond Brushtalk: Sino-Japanese Literary Exchange in the Interwar Period* (London: Eurospan, 2009), 145.

⁴⁸⁶ Exley, 148.

⁴⁸⁷ Gregory Kasza, *The State and Mass Media in Japan: 1918-1945* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993), 137-139.

⁴⁸⁸ Kasza, 129-136.

Umehara Hokumei, the anti-authoritarian publisher of *Grotesque* succumbed to the regulatory regime. In 1932, the Home Ministry imposed a fine and a jail sentence for a particularly offensive issue of *Grotesque* and Umehara evaded police by running to Osaka and working as an English teacher. Afterwards, he published uncontroversial short stories under the pen name Azuma Tairiku in *Shinseinen (New Youth)* and *Kodan Club (Story Club)* until his death from typhus in 1946.⁴⁸⁹ Like *Grotesque*, *Criminal Science* ceased publication in 1932, but not before dedicating a special issue in April 1932 to articles supporting the invasion of Manchuria. Topics ranged from business opportunities and personal experiences in Manchuria, the need to open Mongolia to foreign investment, and sensational stories of female mounted bandits. Then, the magazine released a June special issue entitled “War and Sexual Hell” which featured many articles and illustrations commenting on the relationship between sex and violence. The magazine’s apparent pro-war stance was made clear in the opening anonymous editorial message: “The destruction brought about by the horrors of war is vividly presented here. Nevertheless, for this reason we must not reject war. We know well that the act of facing the armed forces of various nations should be feared. For this reason, we must always be prepared for war.”⁴⁹⁰ Though it is difficult to say whether *Criminal Science* intended this statement sincerely or ironically, the magazine’s apparent endorsement of right wing extremism did not prevent the end of its publication in 1932. Many of the staff participated in a new magazine, *Ninjyō chiri (The Geography*

⁴⁸⁹ Jonathan Abel, *Redacted: The Archives of Censorship in Transwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 100.

⁴⁹⁰ *Hanzai Kagaku*, June 1932, 1; Reprinted in *Hanzai Kagaku 1-21* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008).

of *Human Feelings*), which never achieved the same readership numbers as *Criminal Science* and folded soon after beginning publication.⁴⁹¹

New Youth, previously known for publishing cutting edge detective fiction for urban readers and launching the career of Edogawa Ranpo, published more and more *gunji shōsetsu* (military fiction). A 1937 special issue was titled “Kagayaku kōgun” (Resplendent Imperial Army).⁴⁹² While the detective fiction genre itself was not censored, *ero-guro* or “decadent” elements that had made Ranpo famous were self-censored by writers and publishers. By 1943, Ranpo had become depressed after being silenced by the increasing strictness of wartime censorship.⁴⁹³ In his essay “Insei wo ketsui su” (Deciding to retire), he recalled how he felt abandoned by the publishing world after authorities ordered some of his stories removed or expurgated from a 1939 collected volume. He later reflected: “I thought that I could no longer write detective fiction. I thought the only option for me was to stop writing for a while, just as I did several times before. But even without my making known my intention to leave writing, the editors stopped soliciting my works anyways.”⁴⁹⁴ Similarly, detective writer Ōshita Udaru observed in 1940 that “detective fiction was greatly affected by the Manchurian Incident. The range of topics is limited, and the taste for decadence that was previously the hallmark of detective fiction to some degree was denounced. So the job of the

⁴⁹¹ Baba Nobuhiko, “‘Toshi no jidai’ o kakenuketa zasshi ‘Hanzai kagaku’ no yakuwari,” in *‘Hanzai kagaku’ kaisetsu sōmoku roku sakuin* (Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 2008), 31-32.

⁴⁹² Sari Kawana, *Murder Most Modern: Detective Fiction and Japanese Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 153.

⁴⁹³ Jeffrey Angles, *Writing the Love of Boys: Origins of Bishonen Culture in Modernist Japanese Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 167.

⁴⁹⁴ Quoted in Kawana, 152.

[detective] writer is now regulated rigidly."⁴⁹⁵ In other words, the type of *ero-guro* detective fiction that reveled in uncovering the grotesque and deviant aspects of modernity was no longer publishable.

At the same time, the turn towards traditional culture and national community resolved the sense of anxiety over urban life that decadent detective fiction addressed. Detective fiction and modernology gave readers a schema for understanding the chaotic unfamiliarity of urban culture. But new cultural discourses posited the traditional village as an antidote to overconsumption and excessive Western influence.⁴⁹⁶ The city detective had been looking in the wrong place all along. Similarly, the need to restore individual agency to the urban crowds, to make traces that could be followed by detectives or modernologists, was replaced by a desire to restore a feeling of community and wholeness. According to the Japanese Romantics, the way to resolve these anxieties was not individualism, but losing oneself in a feeling of wholeness found in a pure and untouched Japanese village.

In the same way, the anxiety over women's roles in society and the inability of the Japanese film industry to find success abroad was abandoned in the shift to *jidai geki* (period drama) films. These films appealed to the desire for traditional culture and national community, allowing for the disavowal of the viewer's own cultural moment through an inherently modern nostalgia.⁴⁹⁷ *Jidai geki* could promote national polity ideology and traditional family structures while opposing individualism and modern girls

⁴⁹⁵ Quoted in Kawana, 155.

⁴⁹⁶ Harootunian, 28-32.

⁴⁹⁷ Tansman, 173-179.

without being overtly propagandistic.⁴⁹⁸ Period dramas offered an easy solution to concerns over shifting gender roles - men and women should act as they did in an imagined, idealized past. Similarly, the dream of exporting films to the West was abandoned in favor of using film to unify Japan with its colonies, promoting the Japanese empire throughout Asia with transnational stars and films.⁴⁹⁹ There was no longer a role for sublime women in Japan's changing film industry.

Anxiety had been understood as an inevitable consequence of modernity. Neurasthenia and other mental illnesses offered proof that urban Japanese had attained the same modern mental state as people in Western nations, since they were plagued with the same maladies. *Ero-guro* detective fiction and avant-garde literary movements, especially the *Shinkankakuha*, used experiences of mental illness and disordered mental states to better represent the psychological effects of modernity. But even issues like suicide that had been seen as problems in need of treatment in the 1920s were subordinated to the regime of nationalism and tradition. During the 1930s, suicide was reconceptualized as an expression of "traditional" values and valorized, especially in the case of male self-sacrifice.⁵⁰⁰ In the same way, representing the psychological effects of modernity was subordinated to depictions of a primordial Japanese mentality, uncomplicated by foreign influences.

⁴⁹⁸ Darell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 63-71.

⁴⁹⁹ Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 1-13.

⁵⁰⁰ Francesca Di Marco, "Act or Disease? The Making of Modern Suicide in Early Twentieth-century Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 39 (2013): 325-358.

The colonial grotesque contained anxieties about Japan's place in the international order, contributed vitalizing exoticism to mass culture, and justified imperial conquests. Until the invasion of Manchuria, Japanese imperialism had operated within international law; afterwards, Western powers responded with trade sanctions and criticism without realizing that their approval was no longer necessary.⁵⁰¹ Rather than worry about whether the West perceived Japan as an equal, political and cultural discourses envisioned Japan as leading Asia in overcoming the West. Even the desire to return to the authentic, native culture of rural village life was extended throughout the Japanese empire.⁵⁰² Anxieties that Japan was less modern than the West were replaced with discourses of Asia - led by Japan - overcoming the West through a return to traditional culture.

Writers and publishers of *ero-guro* magazines worried about an increasingly strict censorship regime, but found a compensatory energy in works that challenged the boundaries of permissible speech. After the invasion of Manchuria, both censorship and nationalistic values became internalized. For example, Mori argues that the *ero* song was supplanted by songs around military themes, often promoting heroic sacrifice for the nation.⁵⁰³ And while it may have been impossible to publish political satire, the records of The Special High Police (*Tokkō keisatsu*) show that people used

⁵⁰¹ Robert Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The Culture of Japanese Empire in Comparative Frame* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 149-150.

⁵⁰² Kim Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the Politics of Folk Art in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), chapters 4-5; Harootunian 327.

⁵⁰³ Masato Mori, *Nippon ero guro nansensu: shōwa modan kayō* (Tokyo: Métier, 2016), 42, 221-234. The importance of popular music in modern mass culture was also noted by Ichikawa Kōichi in "Hayariuta ni miru modanizumu to ero guro nansensu," in *Nihon modanizumu no kenkyū: shisō seikatsu bunka*, ed. by Minami Hiroshi, (Tokyo: Burein shuppatsu, 1982), 257-284.

widely-known alternative lyrics to patriotic songs and graffiti splashed on telephone poles and toilet stalls to express displeasure at politicians and the imperial family. Jokes about the emperor engaged in various sex acts or the sex appeal of one of the imperial princesses expressed disdain for oppressive state ideology while allowing the unknown lyricist or graffiti writer to get away with the crime of *lése-majesté*, which was heavily prosecuted.⁵⁰⁴ Although both self-censorship and adherence to nationalistic values had become internalized, people still found subversive pleasure in defying censorship outside of commercial publishing channels.

Ero-guro-nansensu faded from Japanese mass culture in the early 1930s, but not because its creators had stopped being anxious about modernity. Some writers embraced traditional aesthetics or found a sense of wholeness and community in the nationalistic themes of Japanese romanticism and imperial ideologies. Other authors and publishers succumbed to the combination of official policy and internalized self-censorship that rendered publishing “decadent” works impossible. But until this untimely end, *ero-guro* discourses revealed both the reasons for modern anxiety and the ways cultural producers attempted to find sources of compensation and alleviation during the Taishō and early Shōwa Periods.

⁵⁰⁴ Detlev Shauwecker, “Verbal Subversion and Satire in Japan, 1937-1945, as Documented by the Special High Police,” *Japan Review* 15 (2003): 127-151.

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